



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



X-

Savage

יהוה

INSTITVTIO THEOLOGICA

ANDOVER FVNDATA MDCCCVII

*The Gift  
of the  
American  
Unitarian Association*







# BELIEFS ABOUT THE BIBLE

BY  
M. J. SAVAGE

---

*The Bible is the great family chronicle of the Jews.*—HEINE

---

BOSTON  
GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

1897

(

*John*  
*The Gift*  
*The John. William. Association*

COPYRIGHT  
BY GEORGE H. ELLIS  
1883

*Rec. Dec. 30, 1897*

85  
511  
528  
1897

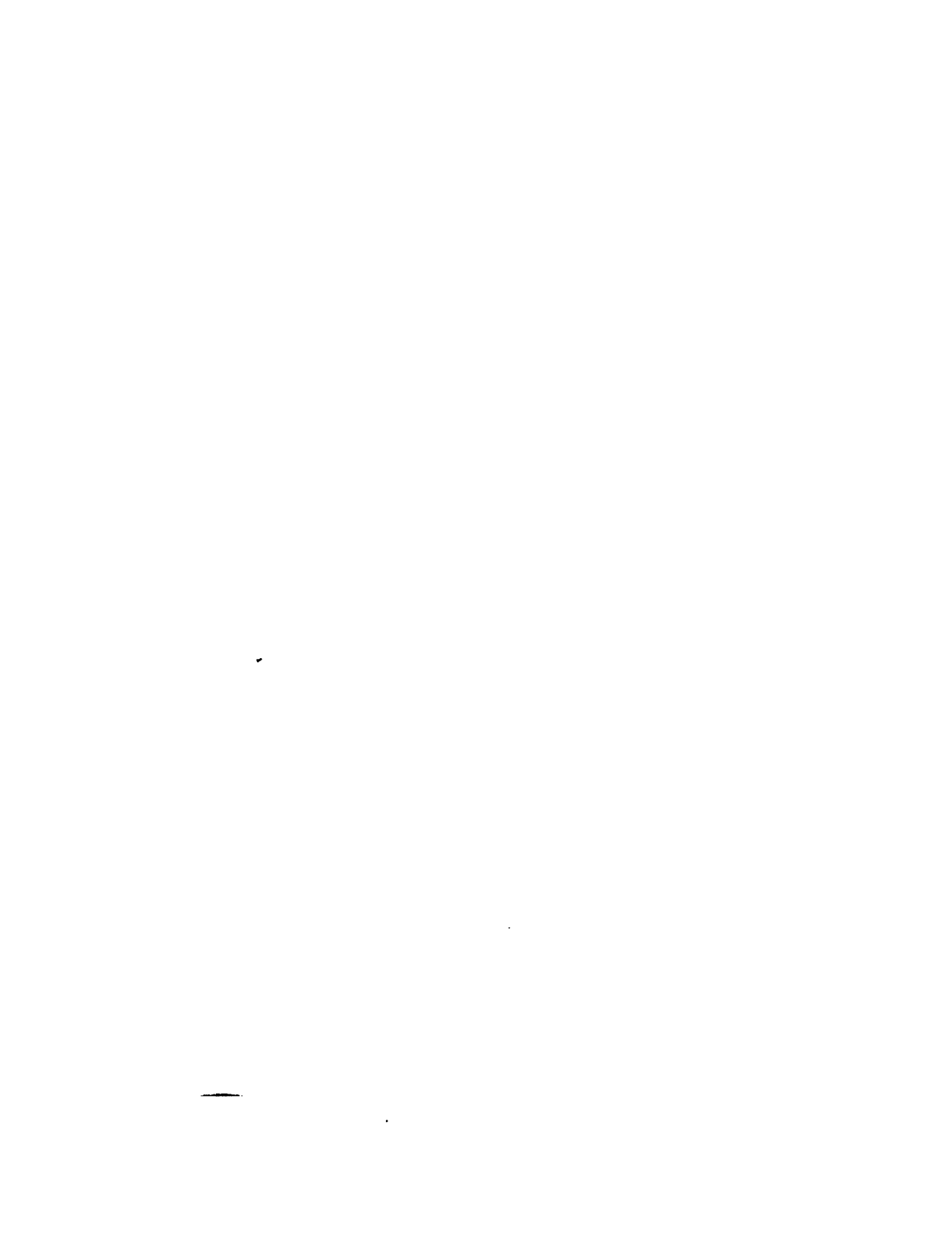
50,558

**To**

**HIM WHO WAS MY BOYHOOD'S IDEAL, AND TO WHOSE  
LATER CARE I OWE THE BEST OF WHAT I  
HAVE DONE OR BECOME,—**

**TO**

**MY BROTHER.**



## PREFACE.

---

WE have just been celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. The one thing with which his name is more prominently associated than with anything else is—for the Protestant world—the dethronement of the Pope as God's viceroy on earth, and the establishment of the Bible in his place. It is then a fitting time for us to raise the question as to whether this work of his can be regarded as a finality. More important than any discussion as to what system of doctrine or church polity the Bible may be interpreted into supporting, is the deeper inquiry as to how we are to regard the Bible itself. This book is an attempt to give a plain answer to that inquiry.

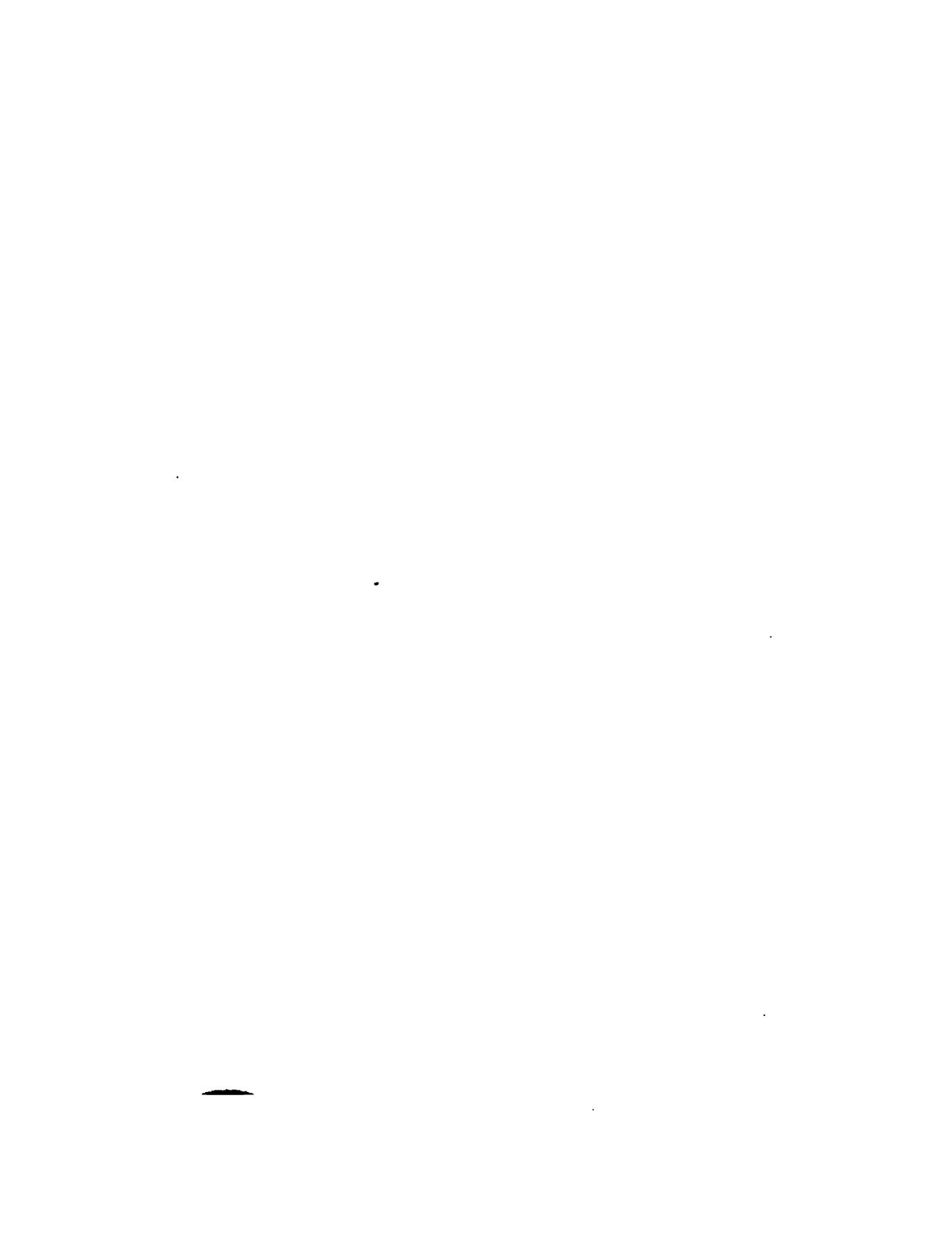
BOSTON, November, 1883.



## CONTENTS.

---

I. THE ENGLISH BIBLE, . . . . .	9
II. THE TEXT AND THE CANON, . . . . .	23
III. THE PENTATEUCH, . . . . .	40
IV. THE PROPHETS, . . . . .	
V. THE WRITINGS, . . . . .	79
VI. THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS, . . .	96
VII. THE EPISTLES, . . . . .	111
VIII. THE GOSPELS, . . . . .	126
IX. THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE, . . . . .	144
X. THE MORALITY OF THE BIBLE, . . . . .	157
XI. THE PRESENT USE AND WORTH OF THE BIBLE, .	175
XII. THE ETERNAL BIBLE, . . . . .	190



## THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

---


THE Bible is the key point of the modern theological controversy. Whatever theory of its origin, its nature, its authority, shall win in this critical contest that is going on, will influence the thought and the progress of the religious world for all future time.

What kind of a book is this? Is it the word of God? Is it infallible? Is it inspired? Is it ultimate authority concerning the nature of God, the nature of man, human duty and human destiny? Is it a book unique, to be set apart in a class by itself? Is it unlike all other productions that the world has ever seen? These are the questions that need to be asked and that press for an answer. How important they are I need not waste words in impressing upon your minds. If this book be indeed in its entirety the word of God, if it be infallible, if its conceptions of the divine nature and human nature, of morality, religion, and the future be unchanging truth, then there is nothing so important as that we should know it, that we should believe it heartily, and that we should act upon it every day of our lives.

On the other hand, if these claims be not true, then the claim itself is vicious, mischievous, and injurious to man. It stands in the way of human progress. For example, suppose a ship at sea: the captain has on board a chart which he believes to be perfectly accurate in every part. He has

a compass, the needle of which he believes to be always true to the north. If they be what he supposes, then they will of course help him; and it is of the utmost importance to him that he should know it and believe it. But, if the chart be inaccurate, if the compass is not to be depended on, then to trust in them will certainly lead him astray, and maybe cause disaster and wreck.

Now, then, if the Bible conception of God, the Bible teaching concerning his nature, be true, then it is very important that we should know it; but if it be not, and we think it is, then in our religious conceptions we may be all astray. If the Bible teaching concerning human nature, the origin of man, the origin and the nature of sin, be false, and we believe and act upon them as though they were true, then we are taking just that course which must stand in the way of an accurate solution of the problem. If the Bible doctrine as to the final destiny of the race be not true, and nevertheless we bend all our energies, contribute our money, time, and effort in order to escape certain supposed dangers when those dangers do not really exist, we are not merely wasting time, money, and thought, but we are leading humanity by an entirely false road, and making it practically impossible for us to find out the real truth concerning these all-important problems. He who believes that the Bible is the infallible word of God must of course hold to this faith as the highest of all virtues, the most important of all things in the world. If, then, it be not true, he is substituting a false standard of right and wrong for the true one. If the Bible be infallible, the most important thing in the world is that we should believe it. If it be infallible, then to disbelieve it becomes a crime in our thought. The use of reason is turned into a danger. Doubt becomes a sin; while, if the Bible be not infallible, the highest duty of man is to



doubt it. The highest duty of man is to use his reason, is to find out what is the constitution of human nature, and on what its development and future prosperity depend. I say then that to believe that the Bible is infallibly inspired, if it be not so, is not an innocent belief, a harmless faith. It is something that stands squarely in the way of human progress, more than anything else of which we can conceive.

We need then earnestly, simply, without prejudice and without passion, to ask and answer these grave questions in the light of all the knowledge and help that we can obtain. In regard to my own attitude toward it, I wish to say to you that I have no prejudice against a revelation. My heart on the contrary would bound and leap with joy to meet and welcome a revelation, could I believe that it were true. Could I believe that God did speak in this marvellous way, with what eagerness would I listen to catch the faintest utterance! Did I believe that some supernatural light might be shed down upon our human pathway which should bring the solution of our human problems, over which brain becomes weary and hearts ache, with what gladness would I look for the faintest glimmer of a ray of that divine light and guidance! Whatever, then, I shall say in the course of these discussions, I beg you not to think that I am influenced in the slightest degree by any antagonism toward the revelation idea itself. But by as much as I desire light, by precisely so much am I anxious not to be deceived.

Let us then, with these preliminary ideas, take up the book and look at it, and see what it is.


We find that it is called "the Bible," "the book"; and yet, as we trace its history a little, we discover that this title is a very modern one. It is only within recent centuries that it has gone by this name, "the book," in the singular number.

It was called long before that, in the Greek, *Ta Biblia*, "the books," indicating by this title what at least is the apparent truth,—that it is not one book, but a little library brought together and made one by being put within the same limiting covers. Before it was called "the books," it was called "the scriptures," or "writings." But although the Old Testament went by this title, which indicated that they were set apart by themselves, it was long before the same descriptive and sacred title was applied to the New Testament.

Leaving the title and opening the book, what do we find? If it be a Catholic copy or many of the older Protestant copies, we shall find three grand divisions, the Old Testament or covenant, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament or covenant; the word "covenant" probably representing more accurately the idea of the original word than does the word "testament." We will leave out of consideration the Apocrypha, because the Protestants have always rejected it, although the Catholics have accepted it as of equal authority with the other two divisions.

We find it not only divided into two divisions, but that there are many books, thirty-nine in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New, making a library of sixty-six little volumes in all. Let us run over the contents for a moment, that we may get the scope of this work.

At the beginning, we find the Pentateuch, commonly regarded as the five books of Moses. They tell us about the creation of the world, the origin and distribution of nations, the emigrations of the early peoples, until at last God is represented as selecting one and constituting it his own peculiar people. We trace this people from its wanderings from the far East through Palestine, until we find them slaves in Egypt. Then, we find them escaping from under the bondage of the Egyptian kings into the wilderness, where




they are supposed to have wandered forty years. During this time, the statutes of God are given them through the agency of Moses. Then come Joshua and Judges, books which tell the story and the conquest of Canaan, stories of the heroes and the wars of the separate tribes before they were compacted under one law into one kingdom. Then, at the end of this, we find a beautiful little poetic idyl, the story of Ruth, her faithfulness and love. Next follows the history of the kings, the various dynasties, the wars of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel between themselves and between them and the surrounding nations. These are related to us in the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Then, we have the story, in Ezra and Nehemiah, of the captivity of the people in Babylon, their return, and the rebuilding of their beloved temple. Next comes the story of Esther, and the founding of one of the great festivals of the Jews; the attempt of their persecutors to destroy them, and the revenge wrought on them by the permission of the king. Now, we find ourselves face to face with Job and that oldest problem of the world, a problem not yet solved, of human suffering, and how it may be reconciled with justice in the government of the world. Passing from that, we find that we have in our hands the hymn-book of the Jews, that which they used in their temple service, called the Psalms of David. Then come the Proverbs, a collection of wise sayings popularly attributed to Solomon. Next, the little Book of Ecclesiastes, one of the darkest, most hopeless, most pessimistic works that the religious or literary world has produced, setting forth the vanity of human life, the emptiness of all things under the sun. Then comes a beautiful Eastern love-poem, misunderstood, perverted, ridiculed, and yet containing one of the most beautiful lessons in all Scripture, the Song of Solomon. Next, we are in the pres-

ence of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, followed by what was supposed to be Jeremiah's lament over the desolation of his people. Then come Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets. When we come to the New Testament, we find the Four Gospels,—you will see later why there are four now, originally there were many more,—supposed to be written by the men whose names they bear; the first three very much alike in their general characteristics, the last one standing apart and constituting a class by itself. The Acts then tell us about the history of the founding of the early Christian Church. Then there are fourteen letters supposed to have been written by Paul to these churches, answering their questions, solving their problems, telling how to order and regulate their affairs, advising with reference to matters of doctrine and practice. Next comes a general Epistle by James to all the churches; then two bearing the name of Peter, three bearing the name of John, and one little one bearing the name of Jude. Lastly comes the Apocalypse, the Revelation of St. John, wherein is set forth in gorgeous strain his lofty vision of the supposed course of human history, until the second coming of Christ and the revelation of the city of God coming down out of heaven.

This is the book of which we are to treat in its varied contents. It claims to cover everything from the creation of the world unto the end of all mundane things,—the folding away of the heavens like a scroll, and the entering in of that existence, when, in the words of the angel, "time shall be no more."

Where did this book come from? So far as we are to consider the question to-day, it is a translation. I shall not be able to cover more ground this morning than the treatment of the English Bible. We have then a translation from certain Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. This which



we call the received text to-day was not the first of the translations. It is the last of the series, beginning with the work of Tyndale, Coverdale, and their compeers, followed by the Geneva, the Douay, the Bishops' Bible, and others, until at last, under the patronage of James I. of England, in 1611, two hundred and seventy-one years ago, the book as we have it was published.

I want to call your attention to two or three peculiarities of our English version before we go on to the theories which are held concerning it. You will find, as you open it, that it is divided not only into books, but these books are cut up into chapters and verses. Are these chapters and verses any part of the original? Not at all. We need to bear this in mind, because it is a matter of a good deal of practical importance sometimes. The divisions of chapters and verses were simply the work of the publisher, made for mere convenience of reference; and, sometimes, they are so badly made that they interfere very seriously with the apprehension of the meaning of the original writers.

For example, it is quite commonly the case that the paragraph or section is divided in such a way that, in reading one chapter, you may begin in the middle of one subject and leave off in the middle of another, thus getting no idea of the matter as it lay in the mind of the writer. The verse division is also purely arbitrary, hardly any more accurate than as though they were divided into sections of half an inch in length without any regard to their meaning. I have seen many a time on the walls of public halls and churches isolated texts hung up as mottoes, which not only do not convey the idea of the original writer, but often quite the opposite. As one concrete example,—I speak of it without expressing any convictions I may have in connection with temperance,—I have seen in halls the motto, "Touch not,

taste not, handle not," as though God, by the mouth of Paul, had issued that as a divine injunction. If, however, you take the trouble to look into Paul's own writings, you will find that he simply quotes, "Why are ye subject to ordinances (touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using)?" to condemn them. That is, Paul says precisely the opposite of what he is made to say in this purely arbitrary use of the text detached from its surroundings.

Not only this, but you find also along the headings of the pages and at the beginning of chapters certain running titles and comments, indicating what, according to the author of these titles, is contained in the pages and chapters so marked. Was this any part of the original? No. This, again, was the work of the publishers; and, many a time, these headings are not only fanciful and imaginary, but grossly incorrect. That is, they are really a process of interpreting Scripture, turning headings and indexes into commentaries; and, as I have said, they are grossly incorrect.

Let us remember then, as we handle the Bible, that the original writers are not responsible for these headings, any more than they are responsible for the divisions into chapters and verses.

One other idea must be borne in mind in this connection. Let us grant for a moment that the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts are the infallible word of God. Nevertheless, as we open our English Bible, we cannot feel that we have in our hands a verbal transcript of this infallible work, because no one claims that the translators were inspired. We have only their judgment as to what the original writers meant, put into the best English of which they had any practical control. So that, whatever the original may be, the translation is not infallible, but is the result of the judgment

of fallible men ; and this is emphasized by the fact that no two translations are alike, and that, even in this revised version of the New Testament which we have received within a year or two, there are a vast number of places where the English and American scholars differed very seriously as to the meaning of certain words and phrases. These differences are so important that an appendix has been added, containing them. If you take up an American edition, you will find the opinions of the English revisers as to these points given in an appendix by themselves ; and, if you take up an English copy, you will find the American revisers' opinions given in an appendix by themselves. We must therefore bear in mind that there may be an important difference between the Bible as first written and the Bible as translated, whatever theory of the original may be held.

Now, then, let me place before you, as clearly as I can, some of the different theories concerning this great book that have been held by the religious world in our Protestant age.

The first one is that which has gone by the name of verbal inspiration. Those who held to this theory — and there are some still who hold to it to-day, I suppose — believed that every word as it appeared in the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts was directly and definitely inspired by God ; so that it was as literally God's word as though he had himself held the pen, and had chosen those words and no other. This theory was carried so far by the early Puritan divines that some actually believed that not only the words, but the punctuation points, were inspired. This seems something trivial to us ; and yet, if you look at it a little, you will see that it is an essential part of the theory. You know how possible it is to change the sense of a passage in a letter or a book by changing the position of a comma, a semicolon,

or a period. Only a little while ago, I saw a famous letter of Mr. Darwin's, over which there has been much controversy as to whether he said a certain thing or whether he said something else, the whole depending on where you put the punctuation mark. It is evident, therefore, that the location of a comma is not a light thing. Indeed, it seems to me as important that the punctuation should have been inspired as the words ; and yet I may have occasion, as I go on, to show you how absurd any such conception as this must be, because the original manuscripts, many of them, from which our version is taken, contained not only no punctuation, but no division into chapters or even paragraphs. They simply present to the reader one solid page, with no division into words even, and many times with only an abbreviation representing a word. Whatever, then, may be true of the translation, there were no punctuation marks in the originals as we have them ; and consequently, if they were definitely and infallibly inspired, it must have been through the medium of the human copyist or the printer. This is the first theory.

The next, which has been the one more commonly held in the Protestant world, and the one generally held by those who call themselves strictly evangelical, is plenary inspiration, from a Latin word meaning full or complete. While they would not stickle for the very words or punctuation marks, they held and taught, and still hold and teach, that the human writers of the original manuscripts of the Bible were so divinely controlled as to preclude them from the possibility of any mistake, so that the Bible in every part is completely true without any mixture of error. This is the theory of plenary inspiration.

There is another theory which is coming to be quite popular, especially among the younger men in the ministry, those who are glad to call themselves by the name of liberal

orthodox. It is the theory which teaches that, though the Bible may be in error in regard to scientific matters, though it may make mistakes as to historical facts, though it may be wrong in its figures and chronology, still it is true and the infallible word of God, so far as concerns its moral and religious teaching. That is, it may make mistakes in geology, in geography and chronology and history, but that, whenever it comes to teaching anything about human destiny, then it is infallible. That always seemed to me a strange conglomerate of a theory. Undoubtedly, it has resulted from the pressure that has been brought to bear upon the modern world along these lines of science and history and chronology, a pressure so severe as to have broken down at these points the whole theory of plenary inspiration. That is, these men have been compelled to admit that Biblical science was wrong, that the writers were mistaken in history, that they blundered in chronology ; yet, falling back from this, they have taken refuge in the citadel of the unknown and unknowable. They insist on claiming that these writers are infallible here ; and they can keep on doing this, so far as I can see, as long as they please, because nobody knows enough about this matter to contradict them. They can claim that the Bible is infallible, when it teaches us about the innermost nature of God, the future world, the need of forgiveness, because we cannot bring these particular questions to any practical test. This theory, then, is one that holds that the Bible is infallible and inspired only in those parts where it is practically impossible to bring it to any decisive test.

But there is still another one which has been popular among the old Unitarians, and is held by a great many of them to-day. That is, they would not put their finger upon each particular thing in the Bible, and say that this is infalli-

ble, absolute, and unchanging truth, while this other is error. They do not say that the Bible is the word of God ; but they change the phrase, and say that it contains the word of God, although they give no rule for telling what is the infallible word of God and what is the human addition or misconception. I could never find any standard by which they proposed to bring this matter to the test, except the standard of individual intuition and taste. As though a man should say, "That part which I like, which strikes me as reasonable, which I am inclined to believe, which is practically helpful to me, I take as the infallible word of God and reject the rest." But let them dare to apply this test, and they have a different Bible for each person, each making his own selection among the different parts.

There is one more theory, still more attenuated than this. You see how they have gradually diminished and faded away, until at last the conception of the writers is something so nearly invisible as to need a microscope to get a good view of it. This theory is that, although the Bible is not the word of God in any general sense, though it does not contain the word of God in any special sense, yet that somehow it is a different book from all others in the world, having a quality of inspiration about it that is unique, that sets it apart. They would feel a little shocked and troubled if you should place the Bible on the same level with Shakspeare or Goethe, if you should propose to criticise it under precisely the same methods, if you should treat it simply as a human production.

There is yet another theory ; and that is the one which treats the Bible as a purely human production, like any other natural, human work. Heine, the great German poet, gave an accurate and adequate expression to this idea, when he said — he being a Jew by parentage — that the Bible was

simply "the great family chronicle of the Jews." This theory treats the book as a great body of religious and ethical literature, as the spiritual biography of a nation, the product of a thousand years of hope and fear, and struggle and aspiration, and yet a perfectly natural human production, springing out of the human heart and human life just as naturally as any other part of the world's great literature. This is what Emerson gave utterance to in the famous couplet of his famous poem, "The Problem," —

"Out from the heart of nature rolled  
The burdens of the Bible old."

There is one more thought which is the extreme antipode, so to speak, of the extreme inspirational and infallible theory, — a theory held and taught with a great deal of vigor by certain rough iconoclasts of the time, and not only by those, but by some of the leading scholars of the world. This is, that the Bible is so false in its conceptions of God, so unfounded in its teachings concerning human nature, so one-sided in its ethical ideas and precepts, so barbaric in a large part of its Old Testament stories, so mystic and unreal in a large part of the New, that it is a positive evil to have the book commonly in the hands of the people, looked on with the reverence and awe with which it is commonly regarded. James Anthony Froude, the great English historian, says — I quote only his idea from memory — that, when he looks over the history of the last thousand years, and sees the unspeakable amount of evil that has been wrought in Christendom as the result of believing that the Bible was the inspired word of God, he could not help feeling that, having it in all homes, regarded as it was, the book was working an incalculable amount of injury. He would regard it, therefore, as a production not to be commonly spread and

commonly used in the shape in which it is held at the present time. A concession to a part of this theory was made recently by Dr. R. Heber Newton, a brilliant Episcopal minister, who is reported in the New York *Herald* to have said that the Bible, in its entirety, ought not to be publicly circulated, that there should be at least a selected or expurgated edition published before it is spread broadcast over the world.

These, then, are the different theories concerning this book, of which I have given you this general account. It is not my purpose to pursue the subject further to-day. As to what we are to think of it, how it originated, who wrote it, when, where, what influence it has had on the world, and what influences we may expect it to have still,—these questions will be the subject of future discourses.

## THE TEXT AND THE CANON.

---

A LADY present in my audience last Sunday morning (I hope she was not one of my regular hearers, because I should be sorry to be so misunderstood and misinterpreted by one hearing me constantly) was overheard to remark that she did not see any use in Mr. Savage's attacking the Bible, a book that had done so much good in the world, whatever the truth about it might be. This may represent the attitude of more than one ; and, for this reason, I wish to make one or two remarks concerning it.

In the first place, I am only telling the simple truth about the Bible ; and it seems to me a most damaging admission for any one to make concerning a man, an institution, or a book, that telling the truth about him or it is attacking it. In the next place, we need to draw a very clear-cut line, or distinction, between the Bible and the theories that have been held or taught concerning it. If you will notice, I think you will bear me witness that I have never attacked the Bible ; and it is not my purpose to do so in this course of sermons. I only attack what I regard as certain false, unfounded, vicious theories involved in the claims put forth on its behalf, which it has never put forth, and has never attempted to sustain. In the third place, we need to remember that theories and beliefs concerning God, concerning Bibles, concerning institutions of one kind or another, may have been really helpful to man in some stage of his progress ; and yet these same beliefs and theories may afterward

come to be hindrances that stand in the way of his further advance. So much by way of comment on this type of criticism.

Last Sunday morning, I treated of the English Bible, its contents, its divisions, natural and artificial, and the theories that have been held in the past, and are now currently held concerning it. In so doing, I took note of the well-known fact that this English Bible of ours is a translation from an earlier literature ; and I called your attention to this somewhat important point, that, even though the originals of the Old and New Testaments may have been infallible and inspired, we cannot claim that we have now a book which is thus infallible and inspired, unless we know that the translators were divinely assisted in their work ; and this no man that I have heard of has ever put forth as a sober claim. But, even though we knew that the Old and New Testament manuscripts were originally infallible and inspired, we should not be sure that those copies that the translators used possessed these characteristics, unless we could be certain that we have in our present copies just those books, and no more, that were in the first place rendered infallible, and unless we could be perfectly sure that they had come down to us through the ages unchanged in every essential feature. But, again, though we knew that the manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments had never been changed, though we could be sure that the translators had a copy that had never been varied by a phrase or a sentence or a word or a letter, we should not then be certain that the book was infallible and inspired. We should need to go back and find out where this original came from, and what credentials it brought with it when it came. That is further back than we shall be able to go this morning, and I shall confine myself to considering the text and the canon.

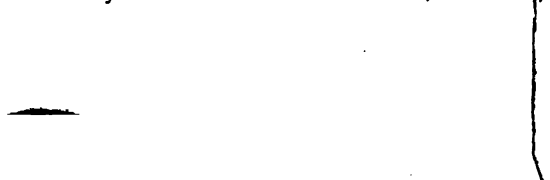
As we go one step back of our English Bible, what do we find? Do we find some one copy containing just the books of our present Bible, no more, no less? Do we find that this Bible has been transmitted from generation to generation without any changes or any mistakes? Instead of that, we find the truth to be almost as far the other way as you can conceive or imagine. As there are some special points that I wish to bring before you concerning the manuscripts of the Old Testament, I shall treat first of those of the New.

We have in the world a collection, not in any one place, but in all, of somewhere in the neighborhood of seventeen hundred New Testament manuscripts. Sometimes a manuscript is complete, containing all the books, sometimes containing certain books not at present admitted. In other cases, the manuscript covers only a fragment or one book or even a part of a book. Are these all alike? Does there seem to have been any supernatural supervision exercised in making these copies, to keep out any error or mistake? Does there seem to have been even ordinary human care exercised to prevent the intrusion of any errors? You can judge for yourself, when I tell you that, within the range of these seventeen hundred manuscripts, there are somewhere in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty thousand various readings. It is only just to say, of course, that the larger part of these variations are minute, not touching matters of great importance, sometimes only a difference in the spelling of a word, sometimes a difference in the word itself, sometimes a difference in a phrase; but some of them are important enough to extend to even whole paragraphs and parts of chapters, so that many of these variations are very important indeed.

Prof. George P. Fisher, of Yale Theological Seminary,

one of the leading orthodox scholars, in an article published last summer in the *North American Review*, touching this matter of the various readings in the manuscripts, has sought to avoid the force of this very important point by saying that these manuscripts are probably nearly, if not quite, as accurate as those we have of Plato, of Aristotle, or of the Commentaries of Cæsar; that we do not feel any special doubt as to the teachings of Plato or Aristotle or Cæsar on account of the variations in manuscripts, and we ought not any more to feel anxiety or trouble about the New Testament variations. But there is a very marked distinction between the two cases, and one that an acute scholar like Prof. Fisher certainly ought not to have overlooked. No one claims that your life and mine for this world, much less our eternal destiny for heaven or hell in the next world, depends on the accuracy of a reading in Plato or Aristotle or Cæsar's Commentaries. If some great Church should turn one of these books into its Bible, and make human destiny hinge on the accuracy of the phrases of Plato or Aristotle, you would then see that the world would rouse and wake up in its interest as to whether we could be certain that these readings had come down uncorrupted from the past. There is no justice then in making any such comparison as this. The point we wish to know is whether we can be so certain as to the phrases, the wording, the literal teaching of this book, called the New Testament, that any body of men has a right to build a world-wide doctrine, and make the eternal peace or the misery of men depend on the reading of a text.

It is thus a question of very great importance for us to find out whether a book, on whose behalf such extraordinary claims are made, has come down to us accurately as it was written by its authors. I have said, however, that there




are some one hundred and fifty thousand different readings in its manuscripts. How can we account for them? Under what influences have they come to exist? Under the most natural ones in the world. If we consider the New Testament as simply a human production, it is not strange that we should have these different readings, changes of texts, misunderstandings, misinterpretations. Every scholar knows that, concerning Shakspeare for example, there are thousands and thousands of different readings, over which the critics speculate and study. But it does not arouse any general interest in the world, because it is of no practical importance to man whether Shakspeare used this particular word in this particular place or that. No question of human destiny hinges on it. It is merely a matter of literary curiosity.

These changes then have come about in the most natural way. In the first place, through the blunders of copyists. You are aware that printing is quite a modern invention ; and that these manuscripts were written by hand, by the monks and students of the Middle Ages, and in the early ages of Christianity. If you have had a letter copied by the hands of a clerk, or if you have ever attempted to do any copying yourself, you know how easy it is to leave out or misspell a word or to substitute a wrong one or to make any one of a dozen common errors in copying a piece of work. Here is the source of a great many of them. Another rises from the fact that it was quite a common thing for the various makers of manuscripts to write in the margin of the book, or at the foot of the page, various little notes and comments ; to suggest one word for another where they thought some previous copyist might have made a mistake. When a new copy was to be made, the man who was engaged in doing it would wonder a great many times whether these notes in the margin ought to be a part of the text, something that the

previous copyist had left out; and, thinking they ought, he would incorporate them into the text itself. A great many changes, doubtless, came about in this way. If you remember that these Greek manuscripts generally were not divided into verses and paragraphs, but that they were written solid, you will see how easy it was for errors of one kind or another to spring up in this way. If, for example, I should send you a manuscript to-day without any division of paragraphs, sentences, or even of words, as some are written, all the letters about the same distance apart, and the whole page solid, the chances would be a hundred to one against your making me an accurate copy, putting in the punctuation where I intended it to be, dividing the sentences into words as I had them in my mind, and so giving an accurate transcript of the whole.

There is another source of error still that has sprung out of the doctrinal bias of the copyist himself. Deliberate liberties were taken a great many times by the copyist, in improving the text, as he supposed, leaving out a word that he did not like, or inserting one that he did. As in that great warfare that waged in the early Church between the Arians and Athanasians, between those who believed in the new doctrine of the Trinity and between those who fought against it, how natural it would be for a copyist to change a phrase this way or that, either on one side or the other, softening it down a little, so that it would not bear so emphatically against the doctrine which he really believed to be true! A great many times these men might honestly make these changes, feeling so sure that they had the right interpretation that only good could come from their amending the text a little, so that it should be impossible for the careless reader to misunderstand it.

Again, we must remember that the standard of literary




ethics then was very different from the modern standard. To-day, we call a man a plagiarist, we convict him of literary theft, and he would be publicly disgraced, were he capable of writing books in such a way as these early workers were accustomed, as a common thing, to do. For example, it was a very common thing, during the first four or five hundred years before Christ and three or four hundred years after,—yes, seven or eight hundred years after,—it was quite a common thing for them to take the work of earlier writers in composing a book of their own, to borrow here and there such material from those books as they cared to use, and to incorporate it bodily into their own work, adding and changing here and there as they pleased, patching and piecing in such a way that only a critic could detect the way in which it had been done. Work of this sort can be traced in the manufacture of some of the manuscripts both of the Old Testament and the New.

Not only that, but it was not at all uncommon for writers at this time to do another thing which our standard of literary honesty would most severely condemn; and that is to put into the mouth of the speaker not the words which he really used, but such words, even extending sometimes to long speeches, as they supposed he would have used, or might properly have used, on such and such an occasion. Let me indicate to you how recently work of this kind has been done. In some of our modern school-books there are speeches or orations, supposed to have been delivered in Parliament by celebrated orators, which everybody knows were never delivered at all. There were no reporters at the time the speeches were made. The way in which the speeches were prepared was for some good writer, who knew that such a speech had been made at such a time, to write out what *might* have been said on that occasion by that

speaker; and it passes in the modern world as the real speech. Sometimes, a thing of that sort is done by a smart reporter now. I was told not a great while ago by a prominent newspaper man at the head of a leading paper that he had sometimes been obliged to report the speeches of politicians, when he could not get near enough to hear more than now and then a word. Yet he must produce a speech. So he caught at this and that, as best he could; and, knowing the general sentiment of the speaker, he would write out as nearly as possible what he might be presumed to say. And, once, he did his work so well that he received a personal letter with the thanks of the orator. He probably wrote out as good a speech as the speaker made, even if it was not just the one that he did make.

To go back to more ancient times, you are accustomed to find facts like these in the works of Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plato. Thucydides and Xenophon put into the mouths of military leaders speeches that they made to the soldiers on the eve of such and such a battle. But every one knows perfectly well that the writers are only putting into the mouths of their heroes the speeches which they might have made, or which would have been fitting to make, not the actual words that they used. If you take up the Dialogues of Plato, you find long utterances of Socrates; but Plato does not claim to make a verbal report of Socrates' words. He represents the general position of Socrates on these subjects; and he puts into his mouth words which are not the words of Socrates at all, but which are the words of Plato. This is very well, if it is fully understood. But, when we know that this may have been done in the case of Jesus, and that, in all probability, it was done by the writer of the Gospel of John, when he puts long prayers and speeches into the mouth of Jesus, which are



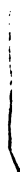

entirely unlike that which the other three gospel writers give ; when we are taught to believe that our eternal destiny hinges on the accuracy of these reports, it becomes important that we should know the character of the literary ethics which underlie this work, to know how they are produced, and how much weight and authority they carry with them.

Not only this, but, to go a step farther, not only did they incorporate the works of other writers, and put into the mouths of speakers and hearers that which they did not say, but that which they might have said ; but they went to the extent of creating and producing whole books under the influence of a doctrinal bias, and for the purpose of carrying this or that belief through the public mind, and making it dominant in the religious circles of their time, which were outright forgeries. We should call them forgeries to-day, although it is a serious question whether we ought to hold the writers guilty, as we should in the nineteenth century. Such writing was not looked upon then as it is now. If a man felt that he was serving a good purpose, that he was helping on right thought, he considered himself justified in doing this kind of work. There are books extant to-day that came very near being incorporated into the Bible ; and it is quite possible that such books were incorporated, books which were written two or three hundred years perhaps after the time of their supposed author, and were published with the names of some old saint or hero attached to them, that they might gain currency and authority in the great religious discussions of the time. We must remember these things, when we take up the question as to the accuracy and authenticity of the manuscripts that have come to be part of our modern Bible.

Let me pass now to the manuscripts of the Old Testament. I wish to say of them in general that all these things

which I have said concerning the New Testament will hold equally with them, so that I need not repeat them. I only wish to call your attention to one or two peculiar facts which bear upon the question of their accuracy. You are aware, perhaps, that the Hebrew language, as originally written, was made up entirely of consonants; that is, the Hebrew word as written or printed has no vowels at all. It was quite commonly the case that precisely the same word as it appeared on the written manuscript or printed page would have this meaning or that, according to the vowels which were understood to go along with the consonants thus written or printed. To give you a very commonplace example, suppose that English were printed without any vowels, and you should find the two consonants, b, n, you would see that it might mean bane, bone, bean, or been, or half a dozen other things, according to the vowels which should be combined with these two consonants to complete the word.

There are cases in the Bible where precisely this kind of liability to error occurs. As a practical illustration, Prof. Robertson Smith tells us that, in one passage, Jacob is represented as uttering his dying prophecies and farewell words to his sons while leaning upon his bed. Another passage, that refers to the same scene, says that he did it leaning upon his staff. This is easy of explanation, when we know that the two words in Hebrew for bed and staff are precisely alike in their consonants, and may be made to mean one or the other according to the vowels added. Of course, you can see what a wide field for misconception and error there is open here. It is long since the time of Christ, somewhere between the sixth and ninth centuries, that the system of vowel points was generally adopted, so that the reading of the Hebrew text was settled beyond controversy.



Now, then, without spending more time on the actual or possible sources of error in the manuscripts, let me say a few words in regard to the formation of the canon. As I have often said, if we were sure that we had an accurate copy of the original text, we should even then need to be sure that we had just those books which ought to be included in this collection that we call the Bible ; and we should also need to know when this collection was settled, and under what influences. It is a very common opinion that the Old Testament canon was settled at least by the time of Christ ; yet this is far from having been the case. About the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the time of the return from the Jewish captivity, the Pentateuch was about as it stands to-day. But long after that time, away down to the time of Christ, and for nearly a hundred years after that, the canon of the Old Testament remained open ; and it was still a question which books should be included, and which shut out.

Under what influences was the canon settled at last ? Was there any criticism, any special scholarship brought to bear upon it ? None whatever. We can have no sort of intellectual respect for the decisive influences which at last fixed for all time the canon of the Old Testament scriptures. There came to be an exaggerated, superstitious reverence for the Old Testament in the Jewish mind ; and it was carried so far that they believed there was some wondrous, supernatural, almost magical significance that might be discovered in every word and phrase and letter. It became a matter of the utmost importance to them, holding this belief, that they should be able to know what words and letters really were to be considered part of the Old Testament scriptures ; and so there was an arbitrary selection made by the rabbins, who determined what particular text should be regarded as the true scripture. After this there was a persistent at-

tempt made, and it was very successful, to suppress every other copy, and all variations from this, which they had determined should be the accepted reading. It was even taught that it was a dangerous, a fatal sin to read or have to do with any other copies. It therefore became a part of the Jews' religion to accept a certain text and no other; and so slavish was the fear induced in connection with this that the copyist of the Old Testament books from that time copied everything, even to the erasures and blots on the page, not daring to depart by a hair's breadth from anything which he found in the manuscript.

The Jewish canon, then, was settled under the influence of the rabbins toward the last part of the first century. The question whether Esther, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon; or Ecclesiasticus, the Maccabees, and others which now constitute part of the Apocrypha, should be included or not, was suddenly stopped by the destruction of the temple, which put an end to the growth of the Old Testament.

Thus, without any trace of superhuman guidance, was the canon of the Old Testament finally settled. And, in my opinion, some of the books which were left out are more worthy to be there than some admitted; and I believe that they would have been admitted, had it not been for the sudden and violent ending of the Jewish nationality. Everything old was looked at through the haze and glamour of supernaturalism. Everything was idealized; and everything modern, as it is to-day with us, was regarded as common, and not having about it any of those supernatural qualities.

Now as to the settlement of the New Testament canon. A large number of books which have not come down to the modern world formerly existed, and stood their chances of becoming Christian scriptures in the early centuries of the Church. There was a very large number of gospels, a great many

epistles, and numerous apocalypses, or revelations. Under what kind of influences and at what time was it settled what should be received as Scripture, and what not? For the first hundred or two years, when the Old Testament was regarded as sacred scripture and treated and spoken of as such, there was no such feeling for any written books of the New Testament, because it was the universal belief of the whole body of the Church that Jesus, after a few years at the most, was to return again from the skies, and establish the visible kingdom of God upon earth. In the face of an expectation like that, what was the use of written books? It was only after this dream had faded away that the Gospels were composed. The Epistles of Paul were written before, to meet important cases of necessity and to answer questions arising at the time; but Paul had probably no idea that there would ever be any controversy as to whether his doctrines were the absolute truth or not. A large number of the books were written after this dream had faded away, and they felt the necessity of having some present guidance. And as it seemed a long time since Jesus had disappeared in the heavens, since the apostles had become memories and ideals,—as it became a wonder for some old man to be able to say that he had seen one of the apostles, or that he had seen somebody who had seen one of them,—they began to venerate and reverence that old time; and, as the links which connected them with it more closely than anything else, they began to reverence the books and writings that tradition asserted had come down from this distant past, and which bore in themselves the imprint of the personality and authenticity of those men that had actually seen the Lord and claimed to know just what he said. Under these influences, then, the old Scriptures—old at that time—came to take on an air of authority, to be

•

invested with popular reverence, to be looked on as something closely linked with Him who had come out of the heavens and had disappeared into them, and to have about them a touch of the divine.

But who settled what books should come in, and which should stay out? You will be a little astonished when I say to you that the question never has been settled, and is not settled yet. It was settled by the common consent of the early Church that the four Gospels should be recognized as a part of the New Testament Scriptures; but there has been controversy from that day to this concerning such books as Revelation, as the second and third Epistles of John, the second of Peter, the Epistle of James, and concerning other parts of the New Testament.

Let me give you a hint as to the kind of influences which came in to determine and settle the question at last. As an illustration, suppose I take the Apocalypse or Revelation of John, which was probably one of the earliest of the New Testament writings. This teaches the immediate or the speedy coming of Christ in the heavens. While that belief was prevalent in the churches, the book was very popular. It was read and accepted everywhere. But when the people waited, and Jesus did not come, and the dream faded away, the book itself very naturally fell into disrepute. They came to believe that the author had been mistaken, or that he had not been inspired. Again, there was a fluctuation and a return of feeling in its favor, as this failure of the prophecies became forgotten. They took it up again, and began to read it with a new interpretation, idealizing it, putting a new meaning in its gorgeous, figurative language, and so getting out of it spiritual edification. They said it was not intended to be understood as literal truth connected with political upheavals and disturbances of that

age. Upon this new tide of feeling, the book came back into favor. Take again the influence brought to bear on the Epistle of James. James was supposed to have represented the old First Church in Jerusalem, and was of great authority in the early Church. He teaches, however, in this Epistle, salvation by works ; and you know it has always been a popular Epistle among Unitarians. Paul teaches just as vigorously salvation by faith alone, and we can trace the controversy in the early Church here. Those who believed in Paul did not like the Epistle of James, and those who believed in James opposed the Epistles of Paul. There are traces in the New Testament of Paul's Epistles being treated with the most keen criticism and almost abuse. Luther said of James it was an epistle of straw, because it went against his prime doctrine of salvation by faith. Luther would not have it in the Bible. He proposed also to leave out the Revelation, saying it was not worth anything, and should not be there.


I speak of this to show how freely this New Testament has been handled. Until the days of the Reformation, no such universal, superstitious feelings have been held as are prevalent in orthodox circles to-day. The Council of Trent, in the sixteenth century, a Catholic council, settled finally for Catholicism the canon of the Bible ; and this included not only the Old and the New Testaments as we have them, but the Apocrypha. There has never been any œcumenical council of Protestants, and so there has never been any Protestant settlement of the canon of the New Testament.

What, then, are the results at which we arrive ? Is it not quite clear that, even if there ever has been an infallible revelation from God in the form of a book, we have in our hands no means for adequately determining the limits of that revelation ? I certainly know of no way of deciding

whether Revelation and the Epistle of James should be parts of any such book. Even if I knew that God had given an infallible revelation in the form of a book, I should not know what books they were; and I have no means of knowing. If we choose to shut our eyes, and take the authority of an utterly unfounded and unauthentic tradition, we can settle the question in that way. We can settle any question by shutting our eyes. But, if we choose to keep our eyes open, and search for a reason that is satisfactory to an unbiassed mind, such a reason is nowhere to be found.

So much for the canon. Come now to the text. Here again let me say, were I sure that God had given an infallible book revelation to the world, I should have no sort of reason for supposing that I had an accurate verbal copy in any English, Greek, or Hebrew manuscript now in existence. We have not a single manuscript of the New Testament which takes us as near to Jesus as we are to-day to Shakespeare.

The oldest manuscript in existence is the Sinaitic. The next is the Vatican, and the third is the Alexandrian. The Sinaitic is at St. Petersburg, the Vatican is at the Vatican, and the Alexandrian in the British Museum. The Sinaitic and the Vatican belong to the fourth century, the Alexandrian to the fifth. We have no manuscript that takes us back nearer to Jesus than the fourth century. Consider then, with all these influences to produce variations, what might have gone on through those three hundred years concerning which we are perfectly in the dark, and then tell me whether there is any reason which appeals to a rational man, which is capable of making him believe that we have any one single text of the New Testament so verbally accurate as to give us assurance that we have really the word of God as he first spoke it to man. Have we any such accurate



knowledge of texts or words as justifies any Church in pointing out such a text, and saying that, on the strength of it, thousands and millions of people are to be sentenced to eternal doom? If I am to have the question raised concerning my eternal welfare, I would like to have it determined on the real word of God, if such a thing exists, and not on the possible blunder of a copyist.

Such, then, are the simple facts concerning the text and the canon of the Bible. As to more special facts concerning the authenticity and authorship of particular parts of the Bible, as to when and where and by whom they were written, what authority they possess, and the nature of that authority, these will be subjects for future research.

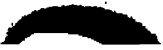
## THE PENTATEUCH.

---

THE Pentateuch means the five books, or, perhaps more strictly speaking, the fivefold book. The limits of it, as it stands in our Bible to-day, are not precisely what they always have been ; for Joshua and Judges were to be found, in the old copies of the Hebrew Bible, along with the first five books, the whole making substantially one composition which went under the general designation of "the Law." I shall this morning, however, pay no attention to this fact, as it is not essential to my purpose. I shall consider only those books that go by the general name of the Pentateuch.

The traditional belief is that these books were written by Moses under immediate, divine inspiration, and of course written before the Jews had entered the land of Canaan. This is a significant fact to notice, because you will remember Moses, the reputed author, died on the other side of the Jordan, in the wilderness, at the close of the traditional forty years' wandering.

These five books contain, among other things, an account of the creation of the world, the creation of all things that live, breathe, and move upon the surface of the earth, including man. They contain an account of the origin and distribution of nations, the origin of language, or rather of languages, and the origin and nature of evil, popularly called the fall of man. Traditionally, they are infallible ; and their teachings are set up as a standard for human



**B**elief, a standard to depart from which is, in the popular estimation, rebellion against God, outright and wicked infidelity ; and, of course, if the traditional conceptions concerning these books be true, then it is rebellion against God to doubt and deny, or teach anything else. You see then the practical importance of the question whether there is sufficient ground for believing that they are inspired and infallibly true.

Those who have held this theory have said that the world came into existence in such and such manner, and at such and such a time : therefore, it is sin for science to dare to speculate or to suggest any other time or method ; and, on that theory, it *is* sin. It is daring to look the Almighty in the face, and question the truth of his word. They contain a certain account of the origin of man ; and it is no wonder that those who hold this to be infallibly true should be horrified at the suggestions of a scientist like Darwin, because, if Darwin be true, God, according to their theory, is not true.

So concerning all the other questions of which these books treat. Because God has said, Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, therefore hundreds and thousands of poor, excitable, nervous, weak-minded young women and old women have been tortured and put to death. Because God has made it the duty of a man to betray to the authorities any confession of doubt as to the truth of this book, therefore persecution has become a sacred duty ; and the men who with bloody hands and flaming torch kindle the funeral pile may look up in the face of our Father in heaven, and expect his smile of approval. Because God has indorsed slavery, polygamy, massacre, wars of extermination, therefore all these things have had their advocates, even in the recent past, as eternally right.

It becomes then a matter of great practical importance in

religion, as well as in science and morals, for us to know whether this book, as we hold it in our hands to-day, be the utterance of God or the traditions of men. And, because of the importance of this, I shall speak as plainly as I can concerning the Pentateuch.

There are three main questions that we need to raise and to answer : —

1. Who wrote it, and when ?
2. Without regard to who wrote it, is it true ? Does it tell us the truth in science, history, and chronology ?
3. Without any regard to whether it is true in its history, its chronology, its geology, its science, are we to accept its conceptions of God and man as final ? Are they up to the standard of our nineteenth century religion and morals ?

These are the three points that, as briefly as I can consistently with clearness, I want to ask you to consider with me.

You will notice that I coupled together, as though they were one, the two questions, when the Pentateuch was written and by whom. I do this because these two questions are inextricably woven together. If we find sufficient reason to make us believe that Moses wrote it, that settles the question when it was written. It was written during his lifetime. If, however, we find reason to suppose that it was composed at some later period, then that negatively settles the authorship : Moses at least did not write it. For this reason, the questions are practically one.

I want to treat this subject in such a plain and simple way that you will not think I am going into technical and critical details that are profound, abstract, and far away. I want to make it simple, practical, and concrete, so that every man as he opens the book may be his own critic.

Suppose I should take the complete edition of Shakspeare's

works, and, as I glanced through it, I should find passages right in the midst of "Macbeth" or "King Lear" or "King Richard III.," that referred to the telephone or steamboat? I should know most certainly that, whatever might be true concerning the rest of the plays, Shakspeare never wrote those particular passages. I might, however, grant that it was nothing more than the interpolation of some other writer, while Shakspeare was really the author of all the rest. But suppose that these passages are so woven into the text that we cannot tear them out without making a break, leaving a gap, which a master like Shakspeare never would have left. Suppose, moreover, that I find woven into the very substance of some of the plays passages that, by implication, and unconsciously on the part of the author, refer, let us say, to the corn laws of England, or the agitation concerning free trade, or the debate about the disestablishment of the Church? Suppose I find these matters taken for granted throughout the substance of the plays. What should I be compelled to believe? I should know that Shakspeare never wrote them, though his name and autograph were on every page. Though I had a thousand affidavits certified to by the notaries of the time, still I never could be made to believe it, because it would be unspeakably absurd on the face of it.

Now let us look at these five books called the books of Moses, and see if we can trace anything parallel to what I have alluded to concerning Shakspeare. According to the popular theory, the Pentateuch must have been written in the wilderness, before the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan at all. I shall not go into the subject deeply, but make general statements. What I give you are only specimens of what may be very much enlarged and prolonged.

As we look over the Pentateuch, we find statements like

this : Such a thing occurred before there was any king over Israel. Do you see the significance of that? When was there a king over Israel? You have got to leap over the time of the conquest, come down by Joshua and the Judges, past the time covered by Samuel and his work, down at least to Saul, years and years after the time of Moses, because there was no king at all in Israel before that time. Yet here this writer says this took place before there was any king. Of course, then, he lived after the time when there was a king ; and he is calling their attention to something that existed in the long distant past.

Again, we find one of the towns referred to and called by the name of Hebron ; while we know from Jewish history that it was not called by that name until after the conquest of the land, and until after Caleb, one of the leaders of the people, had conquered this city and had named it Hebron after one of his sons. Suppose I should find some document purporting to be written by General Washington, and in that document he should refer to the city of Chicago. It would be precisely parallel to this.

Again, there are several passages which say, when such and such a thing occurred, the Canaanite was then in the land. The history teaches us that whole generations after the time of Moses had passed by before the Canaanites were all expelled. And of course this passage was written long after the expulsion. Would Captain Miles Standish be likely to write, Such a thing took place while the Indians were still in Massachusetts?

We find another passage like this,—a command to the people not to remove the ancient landmarks which have been set up as divisions between one man and his neighbor. Before any such command could have issued, the people must have been long in possession of the country. Individ-


ual possession must have been established by common consent, so that the dividing lines between their property could be spoken of as ancient. Sentiment had gathered around them with this sense of personal possession, and the public mind began to feel that it was wrong to disturb these marks that separated between the property of one man and that of another. These are superficial hints ; but the finger-marks of a later time than that of Moses are all over the Pentateuch.

Let me now give you an idea of the composition of the Pentateuch, which makes the matter plainer still, if possible.

These five books, or six, if we include Joshua, bear traces that they are not one single document written by one single hand all the way through, but that they are a composite, representing the work of different writers and different periods of time. So clear and distinct is the work of those several writers that you can take the book apart into separate pieces and have at least three separate books, each one quite complete and definite by itself. That is, you can have three separate stories as though written by three individual persons at three different periods of time.

Suppose that you should go to England and should find there, somewhere off in the country, a house, the oldest part of which was of Norman architecture, with a later part in the Elizabethan style and still another part indicating the work of the time of Queen Anne. Suppose there was a local tradition that the three parts were built by one architect who lived in the time of William the Conqueror, that he was inspired to foresee what the Elizabethan and Queen Anne styles would be, and that he therefore built the house with the three styles at one and the same time : would you credit this story ? It is just as credible, reasonable, and easy to believe as it is to believe that the first six books of the Bible were written at the same time and by the same hand.

Let me show you how clearly this may be made out. You may be surprised to know how very modern this work is. The oldest part of it takes us down to about 621 B.C. We know from the history of the people that up to this time they had never known anything of the second and third parts of the Pentateuch ; that they had not known anything about the peculiar legislation of the second and third parts ; that they had shown no indication of obeying what is believed to be the divine legislation of those parts. About the year 621 B.C., we trace indications of a part of the Book of Deuteronomy. The oldest part of the Pentateuch goes by the name of the Book of the Covenants. About the time of Josiah, we find indications of what is now a part of Deuteronomy, quite distinct in its legislation, commanding the people to do things that, up to that time, they had never, apparently, heard about or done. Straightway, the people begin to obey this Book of Deuteronomy. They follow its directions, make it their highest standard, until, in the neighborhood of 450 B.C., when Ezra comes back from Babylon, at the return of the people from the captivity, he brings in his hand the book of The Law of the Lord, which makes up the third part of this composite,—the Pentateuch. This is very markedly different from either of the two preceding parts. Until the time of Ezra, there is no proof of the people knowing anything about this part of the law, or being under any obligation to obey it. After that time, it is the standard and guide of the people, in the light of which all the preceding portions are interpreted. It becomes a master that they at least always claim to obey. Here, then, you see that we can take these three documents apart, and have three different stories and three different eras or epochs of legislation. This is settled beyond question in the mind of every intelligent and unbiassed critic. A man would prove



a lack of scholarship or a lack of fairness by even claiming a doubt. By these surface indications, by the structure of the book, it is placed beyond question that Moses did not write the substance of the Pentateuch or any one of its books. The historical portions of the Old Testament running parallel with the Pentateuch make all this clear.


Are we, then, to refer nothing of the Pentateuch to Moses? Moses was the great traditional leader and law-giver of the people; and it was perfectly natural that, as time went on, they should refer everything back to him. A precisely analogous thing is going on right before our eyes. If you will only read the development of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, you will find it is very simple at the outset, growing more and more complex and composite with every passing century,—now announcing the doctrine of the immaculateness of the virgin, then exalting her to be mother of God, a deity, and taking her to heaven; then passing from the infallibility of the Church to the infallibility of the Pope himself,—all this grand development of doctrine going on, yet the Church claiming all the time that it has not changed its doctrine from the very beginning until now. The Church does not admit that it has added an article of belief to its faith in all these centuries: it is simply formulating now what the Church has always believed. That is the claim. So the Jews, as time went on, age after age, simply claimed that they were putting into new shape what was implied in the work that Moses did, and which was the teaching of the law of Moses. It is not peculiar then to ancient times. The process is going on around us to-day.

Did Moses then have nothing to do with it? That is a very hard question to answer. He may have been the author of the ten commandments,—not in the form in which they stand to-day, but in some briefer, simpler form,—because,

originally, they were called "the ten words." He may have been the author, then, of the ten commandments. It is questionable whether we can attribute anything to him beyond that ; and even so much is not quite certain.

Now let us pass to our second point. The Pentateuch we have found to be written not by any one person nor at any one time. It covers centuries, and comes down to at least 450 B.C. But no matter who wrote it, no matter when it was written, the most important thing for us to settle is whether it is true ; whether it contains divine and infallible truth concerning God, concerning science, concerning matters of chronology and history. If we can find that it is true, then we can accept it ; and it will become authority to us. It will be just as authoritative as the multiplication table ; and it will make little difference who wrote it or when it was written. Here, again, I can only give you a few examples ; because, to cover the whole ground, would require a whole book, and a large book at that.

Take the story of the origin of the world, the creation, as it is told in Genesis. Can we believe it to-day ? It tells us that the world was created, and not only the world, but the sun, moon, and stars, the whole visible universe, six thousand years ago ; that it was created in six natural days. I hope that none of you will be deceived in regard to this matter, or put off with any theory of indefinite epochs, such as have been used to explain the meaning of the word "day." The evening and the morning were the first day ; and the evening and the morning were the second day. The author definitely tells us that he was talking about days bounded by the evening and the morning. Nothing can be clearer than that ; and it is simply shuffling, it is dishonest, it is disingenuous, playing with words, for anybody to attempt to reconcile Genesis and science by considering these days as long



periods of time. If you so consider them, then the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a long rest ; and we should have to rest for six or ten or twenty thousand years. The writer then tells us that the world was created in six natural days, six thousand years ago, and that a certain definite order was followed in that creation. It says that light was created on the first day, and that the sun, moon, and stars were created on the fourth day. According to this, we had light and evenings and mornings for three days before we had any sun, moon, or stars ; and, if you are going to stretch those days to long periods of time, we must have had millions of years of mornings and evenings before we had sun, moon, or stars.


One other point. It tells us that the fishes and the birds were created on the same day, and that on the next day the animals, creeping things, reptiles, etc., were created. Now, it is a commonplace in scientific knowledge that the reptiles preceded the birds on earth. Here, again, is a grand mistake as to the order of the creative work. So much as to the indications of the difficulties here.

There is another and distinctive account of the creation, in Genesis, written by a different hand and at a different time. These two accounts contradict each other. In one, Adam and Eve were made on the same day. In the other, Adam was made a day or two, or several long epochs of time, if you so consider it, before Eve was made. All the animals were passed in review before Adam, to see if he could choose one which he could be reconciled to take as a companion. He does not find any to suit him ; and the Lord, having decided that it was not good for Adam to be alone, makes Eve for a companion for him.

Passing from these, let us come to what the Bible has to tell us in regard to the origin of languages. You know it has become a great, distinct, wide-reaching science of itself, so

that the discovery of any critical point in the development of a language is enough to make a man famous all over the world. But does Prof. Whitney or Max Müller or any of the great leading linguists of the world ever think of going back to the Bible to study the building of the Tower of Babel as having anything to do with the origin and diversity of languages? There is not an intelligent man in the world who would not smile at the suggestion; and yet, according to the popular ideas of Orthodoxy, these men should go to the plains of Shinar, and accept the fact that the Lord in heaven, becoming seriously alarmed lest these gigantic and presumptuous men might scale the holy heights to his throne, to prevent such a catastrophe, came down and looked over the country to see what they were doing, and decided to confound their language, so that they could not talk to each other, and thus puts an end to their enterprise. This is the account the Bible gives us of the origin of languages. It would be an insult to your intelligence to tell you that it is not true.

Take two or three figures concerning the Israelites and their departure from Egypt. It is said that seventy souls went down into Egypt. At the end of their sojourn there, they had increased so that there were three millions,—an utterly incredible story. There were as many Hebrews then as there were inhabitants in the thirteen colonies at the time of the Revolution. Out of these three millions, there were, it is said, six hundred thousand fighting men; that is, they had an army as big as the biggest one in modern Europe. Yet, when they started out, and Pharaoh gathered together his horses and chariots to pursue them, they whimpered and cried and were afraid, and called upon Moses as though they were going to be eaten up, instead of standing up to fight for their liberty and freedom with their army of six



hundred thousand men. It is a little curious, too, since the Bible tells us that during the plagues in Egypt all the animals were destroyed, how Pharaoh had no trouble in gathering horses enough for a large army.

Look at another thing. There were three millions of people in the land of Goshen, as many as there were in the whole of the United States at the time of the Revolutionary war. Yet word is got around to all these people so quickly that, *in one night*, they departed in such haste that they took their unleavened bread in their kneading-troughs, taking also their horses, cattle, fowls, all domestic animals, the old and the young, the sick and the well. The whole of the three millions of people were notified to gather up everything that they possessed, and to leave the country in one night. If anybody can believe that, he need have no further trouble with Munchausen or the *Arabian Nights*. It is utterly incredible and absurd. And when the three millions of people enter Palestine, though the whole country was not so large as the State of Massachusetts, they are warned to drive the inhabitants out slowly, lest the wild beasts of the land get the upper hands of them!

In the third place, look at a few of the implications as to the religious and moral character of the God of the Hebrews at this time, and see whether you can accept the religious and moral teaching of the Pentateuch as valid for us in the nineteenth century. I want, however, to bear distinct testimony to all that is good, grand, tender, and sublime in the Pentateuch; and there is a great deal, a great deal that the highest and most lovely civilization in any age need not be ashamed of or apologize for. Take the opening words of Genesis, for example,—though you must remember that they were written toward the time of Christ,—the sublimity of the picture of God saying, Let there be light, and

there was light. This conception of God is grand. Again, we find grand conceptions of him as the thunderer, as he who dwells in the heavens, who rules over his people, guides them, loves them, cares for them. All these things I wish to admit in a word ; but the question is not whether there is grand and noble teaching, but, Is *all* the teaching infallible and inspired? That is the question. With the answer to that question the popular theory must stand or fall.

Let us look at a few indications. Let us take this same God, in the very first chapter of Genesis, in regard to his creative work. I refer to the puerility of that idea of having all the animals pass in review before Adam for him to see if there was any one suitable to be a companion for him. Take the creation of Eve as given to us,—the Almighty putting Adam to sleep, and performing a surgical operation, taking a bone out of his side and making a woman out of it: this picture of the infinite God of this universe coming down and working in that fashion ; and, again, after the fall, represented as becoming butcher, tanner, and tailor, killing animals, and out of the skins making coats for Adam and Eve to wear! This is what it tells us. You must take these facts in their literalness and simplicity, and not refine them away with your spiritualizing methods and interpretations.

Take the God who makes this man and woman and puts them into the garden without the slightest particle of experience, without knowing they had an enemy in all the universe, and then making not only their own fate, but the fate of all the world depend on one ignorant act, he himself knowing that the serpent was coming, yet not a breath or hint of it given to them. Conceive the state of mind of a people who believed that the future of the whole human race could depend on whether they ate an apple or did not, who could believe and make Jehovah himself believe that the question

of the immortality of these sinful people depended on whether they could taste another apple or not. For it tells us that God was afraid they would get hold of the tree of life and become deathless ; and, lest such a thing should happen, lest they should eat of this tree and become immortal, he drove them out of the garden and put flaming swords and dragons at the gate. You must rid yourselves of the notion that the cherubim were angels. A cherub in the old Hebrew was a dragon as much as was the one that guarded the garden of the Hesperides. It was a dragon that was placed at the entrance to the garden of Eden to keep Adam and Eve from returning thither.

I have referred to the story of Babel. I will not speak about the kind of God implied in the story of the flood. Let me speak rather of the character, the conception of the God who comes to Abraham in the form of man, with two angels for companions. He sits down in the tent-door of the Arab chieftain, while he hastens to bake cakes, to catch a calf and dress and roast it ; and then the Almighty God of the universe is pictured as eating roast veal and cakes with Abraham. That is what it tells us. And, after he makes a certain promise concerning Sarah, he notices that Sarah is laughing at him behind his back, because she does not believe a word of what he is saying ; and he rebukes her for her discourtesy. These are some of the pictures that are given of God in all their crudeness of barbaric conception.


Look at the exodus, and see what kind of a God deals with Pharaoh and with the children of Israel. He declares beforehand to Moses that he is going to harden Pharaoh's heart, so that, in spite of everything he shall do, he will not consent to their going. He takes upon himself the blame for the future conduct of Pharaoh, or at least the responsibility for it. He distinctly indorses lying at the very outset.

He tells Moses to say that they want to go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to God. He does not say anything about running away. He tells them to deceive Pharaoh, to get his consent on false pretences. And, for what Pharaoh does, he punishes the whole land of Egypt,—men, women, and children. Not only that ; but he punishes with disease and death all the poor, innocent cattle throughout the whole realm,—punishes them for what he has made one man do.

Let us go on a little further. We find that this God, on more than one occasion, distinctly and definitely indorses lying to carry out a purpose. What else does he do? He distinctly indorses human sacrifice. It is implied all the way through. In accordance with this implication, human sacrifice lasted in Israel till within a few centuries of the time of Christ. The God of Moses distinctly commands human sacrifice. He says, if you have vowed to devote a man unto the Lord in sacrifice, you shall not in any wise suffer him to be redeemed, he shall surely be put to death.

Take another thing. When Achan sins, what does the Lord do? He commands Moses to go and separate not only this one man from the people, but his wives, his brothers, his sons-in-law, his daughters-in-law, the whole clan,—men, women, and children,—all the cattle and household goods and effects that he owned ; and then the earth opens and swallows them up. He punishes with torture and death not only the man himself, but everybody related to him,—as though, if one of you here to-day should commit a larceny or a murder, your whole family—wife, friends, and relatives—should be tortured and put to death for it. That is the method in the Pentateuch.

I wonder if you have ever noticed this : that in this same Pentateuch there is a command that on a certain occasion



a city should be captured, and that all the men and all the married women and little children should be put to death, as likewise all the cattle ; but that the young, unmarried women should be saved alive, and distributed among the soldiers and the priesthood. What do you think of that kind of a god for the worship of the nineteenth century? Slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, everything barbaric that you can name,—I cannot catalogue any more,—you will find indorsed somewhere within the limits of the Pentateuch ; and, if that is the divine and infallible word of God for all time, then these crimes, these barbarisms that the world has repudiated with horror as belonging to uncivilized times, ought to be recognized as part of the ethical and religious code of Boston in the nineteenth century.

Is it necessary for us to assume a theory of inspiration to account for this book of the Pentateuch? The highest conceptions of God which are entertained there were entertained in Egypt before Moses was born. Its highest and noblest morals were also held and practised to some extent in Egypt long before Moses was born. Is it necessary to assume inspiration to account for these mistakes in science and chronology, to account for this conception of God and this code of morality which we have seen to be so barbaric and defective?

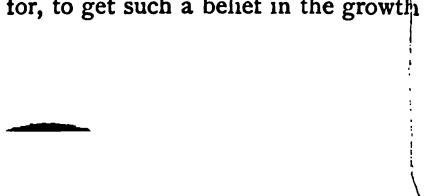
In closing, I wish to call your most sincere and earnest attention to two or three things :—

In the first place, I wish you to note that I have not been attacking the Pentateuch. I am simply telling you about it. I am directly and indirectly attacking a theory held concerning it, which the Pentateuch neither asserts, implies, nor indorses. And I wish to say, further, that, when we take a rational, natural view of the origin of this book, we find nothing there which need surprise us, nothing there which

calls for apology. The views of the origin of the world, of the nature of God, of the origin of man and of evil, are similar to those which were entertained by other peoples in the same relative grade of civilization. They are simply the views concerning God, man, and the world, through which every people in its development naturally passes, but in which no people ought to stay. That is the point. When, then, we take this natural theory of the origin and growth of these books, we find what we should expect; and we are comforted by the consideration that we are compelled to believe that religion and morality are a part of the nature of things, and, as such, based on eternal foundations; that they grow as nations grow, that they take on the character of special grades of civilization, that they are lifted up as civilization is lifted up, that they are enlightened as men are enlightened, made broad and tender and humane as men are brought up to the ideal of their humanity.

But, on the other hand, consider the difficulties that harass us at every step, if we take the old and traditional theory of these books. We are compelled perpetually to disingenuous twisting and turning of texts, in order to bring it anywhere into harmony with the demonstrated facts of the modern world. We are compelled practically to be dishonest with ourselves in regard both to science and the inspiration of the Pentateuch. We are compelled to believe that certain moral characteristics which arose in the barbarism of the past world are the eternal right and wrong of God. We are compelled perpetually to apologize for God; to explain to men how it could be possible that he who is the loving, tender Father of men to-day was once the cruel, bloody, heartless, false persecutor and deceiver of men.

Is it not then something, not to mourn over, but to be grateful for, to get such a belief in the growth of religion and



hundred thousand men. It is a little curious, too, since the Bible tells us that during the plagues in Egypt all the animals were destroyed, how Pharaoh had no trouble in gathering horses enough for a large army.

Look at another thing. There were three millions of people in the land of Goshen, as many as there were in the whole of the United States at the time of the Revolutionary war. Yet word is got around to all these people so quickly that, *in one night*, they departed in such haste that they took their unleavened bread in their kneading-troughs, taking also their horses, cattle, fowls, all domestic animals, the old and the young, the sick and the well. The whole of the three millions of people were notified to gather up everything that they possessed, and to leave the country in one night. If anybody can believe that, he need have no further trouble with Munchausen or the *Arabian Nights*. It is utterly incredible and absurd. And when the three millions of people enter Palestine, though the whole country was not so large as the State of Massachusetts, they are warned to drive the inhabitants out slowly, lest the wild beasts of the land get the upper hands of them!


In the third place, look at a few of the implications as to the religious and moral character of the God of the Hebrews at this time, and see whether you can accept the religious and moral teaching of the Pentateuch as valid for us in the nineteenth century. I want, however, to bear distinct testimony to all that is good, grand, tender, and sublime in the Pentateuch; and there is a great deal, a great deal that the highest and most lovely civilization in any age need not be ashamed of or apologize for. Take the opening words of Genesis, for example,—though you must remember that they were written toward the time of Christ,—the sublimity of the picture of God saying, Let there be light, and

## THE PROPHETS.

---

LEST I should be misunderstood on what is quite an important point for a general comprehension of the development of the Hebrew religion, I take this occasion to say that, if I had pursued the strict chronological order of development, I should have taken this subject first, and the Pentateuch afterward. That is, the work of the prophets preceded the law in the shape in which it appears in our Bible to-day. The period of prophecy, I may say, in a general way, stretches from the eleventh or twelfth century B.C. to the fifth century B.C. Parts of the Pentateuch appeared at various times during this period ; but it was not brought into its present shape, as we have it now, until the greater part of the work of the prophets had been accomplished, somewhere within the fifth century ; so that, chronologically speaking, instead of saying the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, we should say the Prophets, the Law, and the Writings. Please bear this in mind, so as not to misunderstand the real order of development, as I give you some indications of the crude and barbaric origin of prophecy among the Jews.

The traditional idea of prophecy, the one in which I myself grew up as a boy, and which I held even in the beginning of my own ministry, and that which, I believe, is widely prevalent in the public mind, is that the prophets



were a distinct order of men, appearing only among the Hebrews, and leaving traces of themselves only in the religion of Israel and in the Old Testament; that they were in a certain sense a homogeneous body of men; that though they might be like the different instruments in an orchestra, each playing his own special part, yet, together, they made one music; that they had substantially the same ideas of right and wrong, and those the very highest, the divine and unchanging ideas of ethics; that they had substantially the same ideas concerning God, all agreeing in the highest, most refined, sublimated, and spiritual thoughts of God, such as are fitted to lead on and lift the thought of the world forever. Beyond this, it is a part of the popular idea that one of the main duties of the prophets was to foretell future events, things that were to occur fifty, a hundred, or a thousand years in the future, which, by no possibility, could be foreseen except by some one directly and supernaturally illuminated by the divine spirit itself; that, thus illuminated, they became a direct proof of the supernatural nature of religion, one of the foremost pillars to uphold the popular conception of the supernatural character of the Bible, and the religion it represents.

I remember when I used, as a theological student, to be considering the great matter of Christian evidence, that the miracles and the prophets were placed side by side, like the two great pillars, Jachin and Boaz, that stood in the porch of Solomon's temple. Miracles and the prophets were the two unimpeachable supernatural evidences of divine inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible.


The special thing that the prophets were able to see and foretell, as was supposed, was the coming Messianic kingdom. They were commissioned to outline in unmistakable terms the figure of Jesus as the coming Messianic King, and thus

to foreshadow all the glory of his divine and eternal reign. This seems to me to be a fair representation of the traditional idea of the prophets and their work. I shall only treat it indirectly, as I go on with my subject.

Let me call your attention to three quite distinct and definite phases of the development of prophecy among the Jews. I do not mean to say that these three are clearly outlined, following one after another, without any very marked connection between them. I only say that, in the continuous line of development, from the seer or soothsayer up to Isaiah, there are marked phases that it is worth while to notice.

In the first place, as I open the Bible, I find sixteen books, four called the major prophets and twelve the minor, representing the work of those whose writings or sayings have been traditionally preserved for us. A part of these sixteen books were not spoken, not preached, not delivered at all, but were simply written. Some of them were undoubtedly spoken, and then written out afterward either by the prophet himself or by some one who heard him, who supposed himself to be correctly reporting what the prophet said.

As you look over any one of them,—Isaiah, for example,—you will find that a very small part of it even pretends to be given in the form of prediction, to foretelling anything that is about to take place in the immediate or in the far-distant future. Neither are we to understand that all of these books were written by the persons whose names stand at their heads in all cases, nor that any one of them was written through, just as it stands, by any one author. At least, it is safe to say that, in a large number of cases, they represent a variety of authorship. They are made up as one might make up the speeches of Burke or Sheridan, if he had




only fragments of them, parts written here and there, collected without much regard to their quality, and without much regard to their chronology or place or time of delivery, the whole collected perhaps many years after they were spoken, and edited by some one who should put them in final shape for posterity. This is the general conception that you are to have of these written prophecies.

Now for the contents of some of them. Suppose we open Isaiah, and indicate briefly some specimens of the topics treated. In one chapter, he goes on to encourage the people when they are in distress and are downcast by giving them general promises of the divine favor, and by assuring them of deliverance after they shall have received the requisite amount of punishment which they have deserved, and which he declares to be for their good. Then, he rebukes the tyranny, the impurity, the idolatry, or some other sin, of the king or some of the great ones at court. Then, he will turn to animadvert very severely on the fashionable frivolities of the ladies of Jerusalem at that time, describing the tinkling ornaments, the wristlets and anklets and bells, and telling them they would certainly meet with divine judgment and retribution for this lightness and frivolity of life. Then, the prophet takes up some burden concerning the present condition of Egypt or Assyria, threatening divine judgment on them for their encroachment on the people of God, or some judgment on the king for entertaining the idea of alliance with these foreign powers. Then, idol worship in the high places, the mingling of the people in the lascivious worship of Ashera, the Syrian Venus, are reproved. In this way, the prophet is more a preacher of righteousness than one who foretells events that are to take place at some future time. In some few places there may be what may be called prophecies ; but what they mean I shall consider later.

Now take a step back, and see another type of prophet. Take the prophet Elijah. He wrote nothing. None of his speeches, if he ever made any, have been recorded. There are only isolated words or sayings. He is not the man of writing, the man with a pen, the man of words. He is a man of deeds, the actor, the one who appears at some crisis of the nation's history, and casts into the scale of what he believes to be right and truth the tremendous weight of his supposed supernatural, divine influence. He stands up for what he believes to be the rights of the people, and attacks the tyranny and idolatry of the king. He appears like a meteor flashing across the startled sky of one of those old superstitious kings, and then disappears again into the night. Like John the Baptist, he dresses himself in sackcloth, eats whatever he can find in the wilderness, spends years at a time living in the desert places or concealed among the few people who believed in him, and at some crisis epoch of the people appears, suddenly startling the king and nobility out of their semi-secure state. He appears to Ahab, and announces that for three and one half years it shall not rain, and then disappears. At the end of that time, he suddenly reappears to Ahab, as he is far away from the capital, and tells him to hasten to the palace ; for he hears the sound of rain. He then goes up into a mountain, and sees a little cloud no larger than a man's hand, which spreads over the sky. Then, in that wild, rapid, frenzied way of the times, he cries out, runs down to Ahab, and in front of his chariot till he reaches the royal city of Samaria. This is a different type of prophet from Ezekiel or Isaiah.

Go back, and note a third phase, earlier still than these. Here is Samuel, not worshipping in the temple, for there is no temple ; having no fear about the high places ; worshipping God under the image of a bull or golden calf, as it is



called in some parts of the Bible; and engaged in the practice of what we should call to-day clairvoyance, soothsaying, or, except for the evil significance of it, witchcraft. He is the man to whom Saul goes to find out where something is that has been lost. We find, in connection with this sort of prophecy, there were what were called schools of the prophets,—gatherings of young men who lived in the same place, and who were susceptible to this same curious kind of influence which came upon them, and who, when they were under this influence, acted like madmen, stripped off their clothes, lay for a day and a night naked upon the ground, uttering meaningless cries and sounds, and were supposed, while in this condition, to be controlled, guided, by the indwelling spirit of the God who had taken possession of them.



I want now to show you what kind of influence this was, and how it was interpreted by the people.

If we go back to ancient Greece, we shall find they had one method of divination which was by the casting of dice. They had painted dice, and, after going through some religious ceremony, or praying to some particular god, they threw these dice, and then interpreted the will of the god according to the indications of the throw. As we read about that in the heathen writers, it strikes us as utterly irreligious, as promotive of anything but piety or spiritual worship. Yet do not be startled when I tell you that the eleven apostles, after the suicide of Judas, took precisely this method for getting at the divine will as to the appointment of the twelfth man to take the place of the betrayer. If you remember the story in the Book of Acts, it says that the apostles gathered together and picked out two men, either of whom they thought would be a fitting one to fill this important office. Then, they prayed to God and cast lots, or threw

dice, as we should say. In this way, as they supposed, was indicated the will of God as to which one of the two should be the chosen.

There is another thing worth our notice in this connection in the New Testament. In the Book of Acts, it says that, at the time of the Pentecost, when the divine spirit came like a rushing mighty wind, and when the Holy Ghost like cloven tongues of fire appeared on the heads of the members of the infant church there gathered, the disciples spoke with tongues. Remember that the Book of Acts was written a great many years after Paul wrote his Epistles. Tradition had enlarged the original story until the writer really supposed, and tells us, that these persons spoke so that the different nationalities that were gathered there all understood them, each speaking in his own language.

Now go back a step, and see what Paul says about this same phenomenon. Paul tells us that there were a great many different gifts of the spirit among the young churches. Some understood the gift of prophecy, some had gifts of healing, some could lay their hands on others and they would receive the spirit. Among these gifts was one called the gift of tongues. Those who read the New Testament superficially suppose this was the gift of speaking in other languages; and this is what the author of Acts had in mind. If you study the language of Paul carefully, you will find nothing of the kind. The man who has the gift of tongues thrills, quivers, sighs, rolls up his eyes, is in a rapt, "possessed" condition, and in this condition he pours out a stream of meaningless sounds; he babbles. This is what Paul means when he tells us about speaking with tongues. But he and the early Church supposed this was a divine utterance of the spirit of God who had taken possession of the persons, and that the sounds, meaningless to ordinary hearers,



contained some divine message which required an inspired interpreter to tell the people what it was. Do not seek this gift of tongues, he says, because it does not edify, unless there is some one who can interpret. Do not bring discredit on the young Church by seeking to practise these gifts, unless there is some one present with the divine power of interpreting these meaningless cries, and of telling the people the message that ought to be conveyed. He distinguishes this from what he calls prophecy by saying he would rather prophesy, or speak five words that people could understand, than any number of words in a tongue. It is not an unknown tongue. The translators, supposing that was what he meant, put in the word "unknown." It is not in the original.

This same phenomenon reappeared in modern London under the preaching of the famous but eccentric Edward Irving. But that which was divine inspiration in the first century was repressed as an impropriety in the nineteenth.

Now come back to the Old Testament, and find some traces of the method by which the people believed they could come into possession of divine knowledge. It was very common for the people, when they wanted to find out any hidden thing, to go to the high priest and ask him to divine by *Urim* and *Thummim*. What were these? They were, it is thought, bright precious stones which were set in the high priest's breastplate. We do not know how they used them; but, in some way, these precious stones were supposed to have the magical power of divination. The high priest, as the result of some special ceremony or sacrifice, by the use of these stones, precisely as a modern fortune-teller by cards, was able to tell secrets, and answer the questions of those who came to him.

We do not know, as I said, the special method of using

these stones ; but, as a possible hint, I may say there are a great many stories of magical stones that were supposed, after a religious ceremony, to have the power of disclosing what was going on in distant places by a series of shadows passing across the face of the stone itself, so that the person who held the stone to his eye could see these moving pictures. Whether this was the way in which they divined the future by Urim and Thummim, I do not know.

There was another method of divination that was by the use of the *ephod*. This was a curious girdle of the priest, which again in some way, the actual report of which has not come down to us, was used in processes of divination. They also used the *teraphim*, small idols, in the same way. You will recollect that Rachel, when fleeing from her father, laid so much stress on these portable deities that she stole them from her father and hid them in the furniture of her camel and sat upon them, thinking thus she should be able to keep with herself the divine favor and magical protection that went along with the little images of the gods.

I speak of these things as common throughout the Old Testament. Let me give you one or two as illustrations, for it seems as though people read the Bible with their eyes shut, or else as though they considered these things as something entirely distinct from the practices of other nations and other religions.

Let us stand for a moment with Moses in the presence of Pharaoh, and see him holding his magical rod in his hand. Moses, of course, was looked on by Pharaoh as a sooth-sayer, a magician, a prophet like those he already knew, and any number of whom he had about him. When Moses flings down his rod, and it turns to a serpent, all the others throw theirs down, and they turn into serpents also. Moses possesses no power which is not common to the other magi-

icians, except—and here is the indication of the interpretation given by a later belief to these old traditions—the God of Moses was a greater God than the God of Pharaoh. Moses did not doubt the existence of the gods of Egypt. There is no trace of that whatever. Until after the time of David, there was no doubt as to the reality of the existence of the gods of other peoples. Moloch and Dagon and As-tarte were real gods. The only point was that Yahveh, the god of the people of Israel, was above all the others, a greater god than any of the rest. That was proved satisfactorily to Moses, when his serpent ate up all the other serpents. These magicians could turn their rods to serpents, but only his serpent could eat the others. This showed the supremacy of the God of Moses.

When a king went to war, it was not simply a war between two peoples and their kings, but it was a war between their gods also; for Dagon on one side and Yahveh on the other were supposed to fight just as much as the Philistine king and the king of Israel and their followers. Precisely the same is true in the *Iliad*. There the Greeks and Trojans were fighting on the plains, but the air was thick with the gods of Olympus urging on and inspiring the champions, guiding the dart of one, the spear of another, overthrowing the horses and chariots, so that, when the day was done, it was a question whether the conquest was achieved by the people or by the invisible gods and goddesses of the air. We find these ideas throughout ancient times, and they are as apparent all over the surface of the Old Testament as in the tales of the Greek and Roman mythologies.

Let me give you an illustration of the way the Greeks used to divine, and see how all this belongs to one stage of development. Had you gone to Dodona, in Greece, you would have found there one of the most famous of all the

ancient oracles. Any one who came to Dodona could ask a question as to the future, or about any hidden thing, and get an answer from the priest in charge. How did the priest get his information? He listened to the rustling of the wind in the supposed sacred Dodona oaks and beeches; and he claimed to have the divine power of interpreting the sounds made by this rustling, and thus getting the divine message. Suppose you were to go to another famous oracle of the Greeks, perhaps the one best known, the oracle of Delphi. What would you have found there? A temple built over a chasm, or cave, from which issued a vapor; and this vapor either actually had, or was supposed to have, the power of setting nervous organizations, such as were adapted to be priests at Delphi, into a mesmeric or convulsive condition. Whatever was true under its influence, it was only such an influence as you could produce by giving certain gases now. The person becomes unconscious; and before he is entirely gone, as we say, he gives utterance to certain words or incoherent sounds and cries. These words were supposed to be the utterance of the gods who had taken possession of them, and these were the answers that were given to those who came to inquire at their shrine.

This excited condition was sometimes induced by the aid of instruments of music, as in the case of Samuel. The school of prophets was preceded by the harp, the tabret, and pipe. We find this the case all over the world among barbaric people. Certain persons who are very susceptible are wrought on by these sounds until they are supposed to be in a religious frenzy and able to give divine messages to the people. It is also produced by drugs of certain kinds. In India, the *Soma*, a drink capable of producing intoxication, was formerly worshipped as a god, and the person under its influence was supposed to be delivering a divine message.

Many of these things, though haloed by the glamour of distance and the superstitious reverence that gathers about the past, were precisely analogous to the results of religious frenzy as exhibited in the excitement of modern revivals. He who—as I have—has attended a negro revival meeting, or who has attended a Methodist church on the frontier, and has seen a man or woman rolling on the floor, possessed by “the power,” knows what ignorance is ready to call divine.

Again, one of the prevailing beliefs common all through the Bible, in the New Testament as well as the Old, was in the divine meaning of dreams. Either the person himself, or some other person for him, could interpret these dreams. Joseph had the power of dreaming and of interpreting his own dreams. Pharaoh had wonderful dreams, but he had to call Joseph in to give him the meaning. The people had no doubt that these dreams brought a meaning from the other world, and that thus they came into the possession of divine secrets.

Let me now give you the underlying idea, the common belief of barbaric men out of which all these beliefs have sprung. You are aware, perhaps, that the soul and body have been regarded in almost all ages, from earliest times certainly, as quite separable and distinct from each other, not only as capable of being separated at death, but temporarily, so that the spirit could go out of a man, and he could lie like a vacant house with no occupant, till it came back; or, during his absence, another spirit could come in, and take possession. To take possession of a man, then, merely meant that some other spirit had come into his body, and made him do what it would, in spite of the man’s individuality. We have a reminiscence of this in our common language. We say of a person that has fainted, “He has gone.” That used to mean the soul had gone, had left

the body. Even now, when a person is getting over a fainting fit, we say he is "coming to,"—his soul is coming back to the body. We carry this survival of the once universal idea into our language to this day. It was believed in all sincerity in the Old Testament and New; it was believed in Homer; it was believed all over the world, in a certain stage of human culture, that the soul could go away and come back, or that another soul could take possession. It was believed—Cicero teaches it, Philo teaches it, all of them teach it—that, when the soul goes off in a dream, the scenes which pass through the person's mind, the conversations it engages in, are just as real as any event of waking life. They had no idea of the philosophy of dreaming; and, if a man fell asleep, and during that sleep had a talk with a neighbor, and told when he waked up that he had seen such an one, and had had such a conversation with him, they believed that it had really happened. It is perfectly natural then that out of this should spring the idea of possession by another spirit. For example, a person is seized with a fit of epilepsy and falls into a swoon and goes through certain motions, or, as in delirium, carries on conversation with others. When he comes out of it, he is told that he said so and so, or did such things; and he very frankly replies, "No, I did not say it, I did not do it." He has no memory, no consciousness of it. It was the most natural thing that they should have thought that such a person had been taken possession of by another will, by a disembodied spirit, and, while in this condition, the spirit had made him do these things, and had thus talked through him.

It takes only one more step to say that in this way we can get divine revelations; and people who were susceptible to these influences, people who were easily wrought upon,

nervous persons, who had a tendency toward any of these peculiar psychological phases of development, who were inclined to hysterics and epilepsy,—these, as we know, were the ones who were sought out to serve as priests and mediums between this world and the next.

You are aware perhaps that among barbaric peoples, among the North American Indians, among the Arabs still, among all people in that stage of culture, that an insane man is looked on as inspired, and he is treated with the utmost tenderness and care. His words are watched as though instinct with divine meaning, or, if not inspired by a good being, they think possessed by a bad being. All through the New Testament, down through almost the entire history of the Catholic Church, this belief in demoniacal possession is very apparent; and the business of the exorcist, or one capable of driving the spirit out, was one of the most important functions exercised by the priesthood.

Here, then, we have the root of all the traditional beliefs concerning divine possession, prophecy, revelation through another.

These prophets of the Old Testament back in the time of Baalam, Samuel, past Elijah till we come to Isaiah, and the grandest development of prophetic life among the Jews, all believed that they were taken possession of by the spirit, and that they were speaking not their own words, but the words of this indwelling power, which for the time being had subdued their own aptitudes and faculties, and simply used them for this purpose.

I do not wish you to understand that, because I have given you thus the root of prophecy, I have not the highest and noblest feeling of respect toward the grandest fruits and noblest outcome of it in Hebrew history. It is nothing against astronomy that it had its beginning in astrol-

ogy. It is nothing against chemistry that it had its beginning in alchemy. It is nothing against any of the grand scientific developments of the world that all human culture, if traced down, finds its roots in crudeness, in ignorance, in senseless speculations. The function of prophecy among the Hebrews was one of the grandest, in its higher developments, that has ever been seen in the history of any religion on the face of the earth. The prophet was the tribune of the people, standing between the tyrant and the wronged, lifting up his voice for the noblest ethics and the grandest religious ideas of his time. It is indeed true that the earlier prophets did not teach the morality which we should expect of the leading teachers of to-day, but they taught the highest of their age. It is true that many of the earlier prophets were not monotheists. They believed in a great many gods. They worshipped images of Yahveh in the high places. Elisha and Elijah were not monotheists. They lived in the northern kingdom, after it was separated from Judah. The first thing the leader of the northern kingdom did was to set up two golden oxen, images of Yahveh,—for God was worshipped at this time under the images of these golden calves,—as other people worshipped their gods under some other form. These great laws against idolatry were developed a long time after David and Elijah and Elisha. It was a later outcome of the religious development of the people. They worshipped Yahveh under these images. They were not scandalized at idol worship, and that the symbols of the worship of some other god stood right alongside their own : only they felt that Yahveh was their special God, and they recognized him as supreme.


We look back at these prophets, and, thrown into shadow by their sides or leading up to them, we see the indistinct outline of other prophets who have been forgotten.

They, in their time, were believed in as much as Elijah or Elisha. As time goes by, it sifts and gleans the gold from the sand ; and as we look back, down the ages, we fix our minds on Elisha, Elijah, Samuel, Isaiah, Micah, Amos, those great men. Why? Not because they were believed in chiefly by the people of their time, but because they really were the men who stood for the highest and grandest things of their age ; and the others were pronounced, after the age had gone by, to be false prophets, because it had been proved by experience that the things they stood for and taught were not the highest truth of the time. The process of selection was as natural as that by which we take out Abraham Lincoln and Gov. Andrew as the ones that best represented the ideas that experience shows were the highest and truest of their time, those to which victory was given, and which have been made the dominant ones of the age.

These people, then, did a grand service for Israel. It is these prophets that we have to thank for the highest and finest outflowering of the religious life of the people ; and the idea which they represented was higher than any religious development that the world had then seen. When Jesus said God is to be worshipped, not in this particular place or that, but in spirit and in truth, because he is spirit, he was only echoing the grandest sayings of Micah and Isaiah and Ezekiel. They taught this grand spiritual religion. They stand as representatives and prophets of monotheism to all coming time. We shall not be able to get any higher, sweeter notions of religion than some which they taught. All we can do is to take the germ, develop and apply it broadly over human society. When Micah says, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" he has given us as fine a definition as the world has yet attained. We can-

not improve the definition : all we can do is to live it out. There is one other point as important as any of which I have treated, and that is the question whether the prophets did ever foretell things that were to come to pass in the far distant future in such a way as to indicate that they had anything in the way of supernatural knowledge. I answer in one word, No. There is no proof whatever that the prophets had any supernatural knowledge of the future in any degree beyond that of any shrewd observer of the forces at work in his time, who has learned to understand that every condition is a cause that must be followed by its natural effect. Let me take up two or three typical examples, that I may show you how true this is. It is commonly said that Jeremiah prophesied that the Jews would go into captivity for seventy years, and then return. He does make that prophecy, but it was not fulfilled. It is common to say that it was ; but they reach the fulfilment by doctoring the facts, by fixing an arbitrary time for the beginning and an arbitrary time for the ending of the period. In that way, they can reach to about sixty-six years. They say that that is near enough, and call it seventy years ; but it is a purely arbitrary process, and is beneath the notice of any intelligent and respectable critic.

Again, Ezekiel in the twenty-sixth chapter makes a definite prophecy that Tyre, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, was to be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and his army. It was to be utterly destroyed, so that the bare rock on which it was built was to be a place for the spreading of nets by the fishermen. The city of Tyre has been destroyed, and there is not much left but the bare rocks ; and the fishermen have probably spread their nets a great many times on them since that day. But the critical point is that it was not done by Nebuchadnezzar, nor for a great many



years after his time. It was really destroyed by Alexander the Great, when going East for the conquest of Persia. So this prophecy was not fulfilled.

Take that prophecy supposed to be connected with the New Testament and the development of Christianity. Isaiah says, A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel. Then, it goes on to say that, before this child grows to be old enough to distinguish good from evil, a definite event, which is close at hand, shall happen. This prophecy has been always applied to Jesus, and it has been supposed to be a confirmation of the most stupendous miracle of history. In the first place, Isaiah does not say anything about a virgin: he simply says a young woman. For all that the word means in the original, she might have been married half a dozen times. Then, it is definitely stated that the event which is to take place is not in any far distant future. It is to occur before the child shall be old enough to know good from evil. It is only a faith so blind that it will not see, that dares, in the face of modern scholarship, to bring up a case like this as an example of a prophecy relating to a far distant event, and to claim that it has been fulfilled.


I say then, in general terms, that there is not a single case in the Old Testament of a distinct and definite prophecy of a distant event, where there is satisfactory proof that it was ever fulfilled. The prophets themselves did not claim to exercise any such power of foretelling events.

What did they do? They did just what any of us can do in a measure. If, for example, I should examine a railroad bridge, and find one of the abutments or piers was crumbling, and that with every train that went over it it grew weaker and weaker, it would not take any supernatural knowledge to say that some day the bridge would fall, and

involve ruin and disaster. If I were to see that there was a growing hatred of France on the part of Germany, and a growing power in Germany to accumulate money, to equip and train magnificent armies, and if, by and by, something should happen to give Germany the opportunity it desired to declare a war with France, it would not require supernatural knowledge to prophesy desolation as the result. If I see any one of you breaking the laws of health, it does not need divine inspiration to foretell the sequel.

These prophets then foretold that, unless people repented and forsook their evil ways, such and such calamities would naturally and necessarily follow ; and this grew out of their belief that God was a sovereign who loved righteousness, and would not suffer his laws to be permanently disobeyed. This is the sum of what is genuine and worthy your notice among the prophecies of the Old Testament.

I want to give you one or two illustrations outside of the Bible, to show you that there is no need of supernatural aid to foretell some things which are very startling. Look at the prophecies of Lord Chesterfield, of Arthur Young, of William Cobbett, of Heine, of David G. Crowley. If they had been in the Old Testament, they would have been picked out as those of the most astonishing nature. They are more definite in their terms, and more completely fulfilled, than anything that the Bible anywhere contains. Lord Chesterfield was that famous dandy, a writer and thinker of a certain sort, a person of whom some one once said that he would have been a philosopher, if the universe had been a drawing-room ; a man of no character, one far from the ideal of a prophet. He prophesied, long before the time, the coming of the French Revolution. Arthur Young, a traveller and shrewd thinker and observer, prophesied the same thing, when no one in Europe dreamed of its



possibility. William Cobbett did a more wonderful thing. He was a farmer of marked ability, a good thinker, a writer of good English. At the very beginning of this century, he prophesied the secession of the Southern States. David G. Crowley, in a magazine which was published in New York in 1872,—which is no longer published,—prophesied the great panic which swept over this country and ruined so many business men. He went so far as to say that this would probably be precipitated by the failure of the Northern Pacific Railroad and the bankers connected with it. But the most remarkable prophecies of the modern world are those of Heine, the German poet, a man of whom it has been said that he read all the sanctities of morals and religion backward, a man who was bitter, cynical, malevolent toward his enemies, ungrateful to his friends, thoughtless, sarcastic; not a man that would be supposed to be selected by the Supreme Being as a medium of prophecy. He prophesied, long before Europe and America dreamed of such a thing, the war between Germany and France, and that France would be utterly overthrown; he spoke of the line of forts which Thiers was building around Paris, saying that the enclosing army would crush the city like a contracting iron shroud; that the communists would arise in their fury; that they would strike at the fine public buildings, and the higher developments of science and art; and that, in the midst of great popular disturbances, they would hurl the Vendôme column to the ground. These are specimens of some secular prophets and their work. I venture to say that nothing in the sacred literature of the world is so definitely outlined and so exactly fulfilled. They were based upon a skilful reading of the forces of the world and upon a knowledge of the laws of cause and effect.

Prophecy in Israel at last died out, and was superseded by

the Law and its interpretations in the synagogues ; and the synagogues were the direct predecessors of the Christian Church.

We need not regard it as a loss that there is no power of foreseeing the future. It would undoubtedly be to us a calamity ; and yet we do have the power to read just as much of it as we need to know. As Patrick Henry once said, No one can read the future, except in the light of the past. In the light of that past, tracing the causes and the forces that work in human history, we are able to tell the natural and necessary results of any forces we choose. Instead of this delusive light that comes in the absence of reason, that takes possession of the brain, and sweeps away a man's will and a man's intelligence, and utters meaningless intimations concerning the future,—instead of that, we find to-day God and his eternal truth by the development of reason, by its broadest use in every department of human life, by humbly studying the facts of the universe, and deducing their laws, and thus tracing the causes at work that have made the present and that are making the future.

## THE WRITINGS.

---

NOR long after the return of the Jews from captivity, that section of the Old Testament which went by the name of the Law, the principal part of which was the Pentateuch, came into its present condition. It is said that Ezra returned from Babylon with the law of the Lord in his hand. Some time after this,—perhaps during the fourth century before Christ,—the second collection of the Old Testament was made, and generally accepted among the people. This second collection went by the name of the Prophets, and it is this of which I treated in my last discourse.

After the Law and the Prophets had been collected, and had been received universally by the people, and had acquired that character of peculiar sacredness which made them regarded as the very word of God, there still remained a large body of miscellaneous writings which had not yet acquired this character of sacredness. They were coming, however, to be looked upon as having a peculiar, precious character or quality, which set them apart from any and all other books excepting those which were already accepted in the canon. These miscellaneous writings were twelve in number. They were the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. These were the twelve books which made up the collection which was called the Writings.

In the New Testament, when you find the Old Testament

referred to, it is generally under the name of the Law and the Prophets, or the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms. Jesus is sometimes represented as using this last phrase. Those three terms cover the whole of the Old Testament literature, the word "Psalms" being used first as the most important part of the collection, and thus giving name to the whole. I remember James Freeman Clarke published a volume of sermons, in which the name of the first sermon is used as the title of the whole book. In just this way, the third collection went by the name of the Psalms, because it was the first and most important part.

I shall not be able to go into any minute and critical examination of each of these twelve books, for I neither have time nor is it necessary for the purpose I have in view. My object is to consider the origin, authority, and authenticity of the books that make up our Bible, so that we may understand how we ought to treat them, how much obedience we ought to yield to them, and what relation they bear to the other great books of the world, what relation they bear to the conduct of our daily life.

It will not be necessary for me to touch at length on many of these books. I will only characterize them in a word, and concentrate the attention of the morning on three or four of chief importance.

The Chronicles in the Hebrew copy of the Scriptures stood as the very last book, although it has been placed before the Prophets in our modern collection. It is a somewhat loosely written history, derived from the Temple archives and historical records, which either were not accessible to the writer of Samuel and Kings, or which for one reason or another he failed to use. It is of no special importance, and need not detain us.

Daniel has played a very important part in the history of

Christian speculation. It stands, as you know, as the fourth of the major prophets, and goes by the name of prophecy. During the larger part of the Christian centuries, it has been understood that it was written by Daniel himself during his captivity in Babylon, and that it is a distinct prophecy concerning great future events which, in majestic figure and vision, are outlined and foreshadowed. Yet the Book of Daniel, as a matter of fact, was the very last one which the Jews received into their canon. Instead of having been written in the sixth century, it was written probably in the second century, during the time of some of the Jewish wars, perhaps under the tyranny of Antiochus, with the purpose of encouraging the people in times of very great oppression. Yet this book has been characterized in all earnestness as a "pious fraud," meaning by that not what we should mean, were that term used to characterize any modern composition. The writer of Daniel had no idea of doing anything wrong. He believed he was justified in the work in which he was engaged. He was an earnest lover and friend of his people, and desired to comfort them, and strengthen their hearts and hands in the great conflict in which they were engaged, to keep them patient until they should be victorious and reorganized. He writes this book, and attributes its authorship to Daniel, a person who lived some hundreds of years before. He thought, by sending it out under the authority of this great name, it might speedily take hold of the popular mind and heart, and produce the desired effect. Yet this book has been the one to which the Second Adventists have appealed. A book from whose mystical figures people have dared to read the future, year after year and age after age, dealing with "a time, times, and a half," with the big horn and the little horn, and with the beasts, in their endeavor to picture the future course and destiny of nations.

You will judge from the time when the book was written how very little profit there has been in this kind of speculation.

Esther is a very peculiar book, one that the Jews long looked at askance before receiving it into their canon. It is marked by the fact that it does not contain the name of God, and has no religious character about it whatever. The Jews, while they were in captivity, adopted a feast called the Purim, which became one of their most famous feasts, and to which they were greatly attached. After the return from the captivity, it was difficult to make this feast popular in Palestine. Undoubtedly for the purpose of giving a plausible Jewish origin to this festival, and to make it acceptable to the Palestine Jews, this book was written. At least, such is its probable scope and purpose.

Ruth is a beautiful pastoral idyl, one of the most beautiful things in the whole Bible. Its whole purpose, so far as we can see, and that which made it so dear to the popular heart, is the fact that it traces the supposed genealogy and origin of David, their favorite king and their ideal national hero.

Lamentations is simply an anonymous book, written in a strain of elegy, and mourning over the desolations of the people.

Ezra and Nehemiah, two books, though substantially one, give us an account of the history of the revival of the Jewish people and the reorganization of their national religion after their return from the captivity.

The Book of Proverbs, supposed to have been written by Solomon just as it stands, indicates on its surface that it has a divided authorship. The last chapter, it is said, was written by the mother of King Lemuel, another by Agur. Whole chapters throughout the book are not proverbs at

all, but ethical treatises, containing advice from one who has been through life and learned its temptations and meaning. They could not have been written by Solomon or by any one man. Many of the proverbs are not even of Jewish origin. But the tendency to attribute such a book to a particular author is perfectly natural. As if to-day I should make a collection of prudential maxims such as Poor Richard made himself famous for, and entitle it *Maxims* by Benjamin Franklin and others, and the book should grow and additions be made to it, it would be easy for the popular mind to think that he was the author of them all. People would cease to make any distinction between his maxims and the others. They would quote these maxims as though all belonged to Poor Richard's sayings. In this way, the Book of Proverbs has probably grown. Solomon had a great reputation among his people for shrewd observation, for wise and witty sayings. He was skilled and experienced in interpreting riddles and solving problems of nature and of life; and he came to stand in their minds as a representative proverb-maker, and tradition associates his name with this collection. This tendency is perfectly natural. You constantly hear people quoting sayings from Sydney Smith which may possibly have been familiar to ancient Rome or Greece, or perhaps may have originated last year in a Western newspaper, but attributed to him, because he is the representative wit of the English people; and it is safe to suppose that anything witty of which the origin is not known was originated by him.


Let us now concentrate our attention on the four most important books in this collection called *The Writings*.

First, the collection of Psalms, the Psalms of David, as they are popularly called. I used to suppose, and probably most of you were taught to believe, that, in spite of the fact

that the sons of Korah and the name of Moses and other names are given as the composers of some of these psalms, yet David was the writer of them all. This, I say, is the popular idea that has been in the minds of the people for centuries.

What is this Book of Psalms? It is nothing more nor less than the Jewish hymn-book. It is the hymn-book of the second temple; that is, the temple built under the auspices of Ezra and Nehemiah on the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. As we examine the book, we find it divided into five different sections or separate classes of hymns or psalms. The first reaches from the second to the forty-first psalm; the second, from the forty-second to the seventy-second; the third, from the seventy-third to the eighty-ninth; the fourth, from the ninetieth to the one hundred and sixth; the fifth, from the one hundred and seventh to the one hundred and forty-ninth. You will notice that I say nothing about the first or last psalms. The first was added after the general collection was made as a sort of general introduction, and in the old Jewish psalm-book the second psalm counted as the first. The one hundred and fiftieth psalm was added as an epilogue to the general collection. So there were originally only one hundred and forty-eight psalms. You will find the second psalm quoted in the New Testament; and, although our translators have made Jesus quote from the second, in the original Greek he quotes from the first, because that was originally the first.

These five books were collected at five different times. I need not go critically into this. The first book, either partially or entirely, was brought together and was in use during the service of the first temple, the temple of Solomon. In this first book, if anywhere, we must look for some of the



poetic work of King David; for, after that first book, you will probably find none of his work at all. As you look at these psalms, you will see that they have various headings, — such as “A Psalm of David,” or “David’s confidence in God’s grace,” or “David praiseth God for his deliverance,” — but you are to remember as you read them that these are no part of the original work at all. All these headings and notes are the work of editors, and not of the poetical authors themselves. If you look back to your childhood, you can remember how you used to hear the minister in the pulpit, or your father at morning worship, reading, as though they were a part of the inspired Psalm, certain detached words which we now know to be a sort of musical notation. It is as though, when reading the hymn, I should read the words *andante*, *fortissimo*, — Italian words for the guidance of the musicians. So certain words, such as *Selah* and *Higgaion*, are simply indications to the singers as to how the music should be performed, whether with accompaniment of instruments or by voices alone, whether high or low, etc.

Now, a word in regard to temple music, that you may understand something as to how these hymns were used. Some were used only for special occasions, as on festivals, — as we have our Easter and Christmas hymns, suitable only to those occasions. Others formed part of the general service. It is stated in one place in the Bible that they had some four thousand singers. That is probably a larger number than was permanently attached to the temple. They had, however, between two and three hundred men and women engaged in the temple singing. The idea that the women must be shut off in a gallery by themselves apart from the men was not a part of the Old Testament idea of service. It is a more modern notion. There were then between two and three hundred voices. These were accompanied

generally by stringed instruments simply to aid the singers, as we are accompanied by the organ to sustain and guide and direct the multitude of our voices. If you think of the three hundred men and women's voices, with lyres and harps, and now and then cymbals to mark the time, as we use them to-day, you will have a very good idea of the temple choir, as they performed their daily and Sabbath services. Only you must not think of them as singing as we do ; for harmony, or the blending of the different parts of the song in one general effect, is a modern thing in music, and was unknown to the ancient Hebrews. They had no poetry in the sense in which we use that word, perfect in rhythm, time, and rhyme. Theirs was perfect only in alliteration and rhythm, or measure. There was no rhyme. Their singing was more like a chant than anything we call harmonic music : they sang only melody.

These five books, then, that make up the Psalms, were collected at different times by different editors. They came at last to be looked on as chiefly the work of David. How did this idea arise ? In several ways.

Suppose I should make a collection of hymns. I might take, as a basis, "Watts and Select." If by and by that book passes out of use, and somebody else makes a collection, and carelessly marks all taken from "Watts and Select" as simply "Watts," meaning the collection and not that he was the author, when by and by "Watts and Select" should be entirely lost, many would suppose that Watts was the author of all the hymns bearing his name in the last collection. And remember that in those old times there was no printing, and no chance for people to correct errors by comparison. In this way, therefore, many of the old psalms that formed part of the Davidic collection, which was formed for the first temple, were transferred to the later

books, and were therefore thought to have been written by David.

It is absurd to suppose that he wrote many. Let me indicate a few reasons why he could not have done so. I take one of the Psalms, for example, with reference to the temple worship. Of course, David did not refer to that. There was no temple in existence until after he was dead. If joy and love in temple worship were expressed, it was written by some one who lived after there was a temple.

Take the one hundred and nineteenth psalm, devoted to a passionate love and admiration for the law. The law came into its present shape after the captivity. Before a person could write the one hundred and nineteenth psalm, the law must have been familiar to his mind for years and years, until there could grow up this passionate admiration and love for it. It must have been made dear by association. It could not have been written until within a few centuries before Christ, hundreds of years after David was dead.

The one hundred and thirty-seventh psalm, beginning, "By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down ; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion," must have been written by some one who had been in Babylon during the captivity, hundreds of years after David was dead.

How has the popular idea of David arisen? The people have assumed that David wrote the Psalms ; and then they have gone to work and created an ideal sort of man, made up of the materials of which the Psalms are composed, and they call that David. That is, they have assumed that he wrote the Psalms, and have created an ideal image of such a man as would be likely to write such things as these. They have made him spiritual, noble, a monotheist, giving the highest worship to God. But look at the outlines of the early part of his life. He went into the wilderness at the head of a

band of cut-throats, murderers, and convicts of every kind, and there remained for a certain number of years, until strong enough to seize the throne. Then, he is a barbaric leader, a man of immense power and force of personality, a man of great genius, a man who first welded those conflicting tribes into one nation, but no more of a saint than Richard Cœur de Lion or Henry VIII. He was cruel and vindictive. He worshipped Yahveh; but he also worshipped Baal, and named one of his sons for him. He sacrificed the seven sons of Saul to Yahveh; and, when he conquers the Ammonites and captures one of their rebellious cities, he puts the inhabitants to the severest torture, and burns them alive. And he did this to all the captured cities of the Ammonites. This is not the kind of man you would think of as writing the poetic and beautiful and spiritual lines of many of the Psalms, that have been the comfort of souls for hundreds of years. You might as well think of Henry VIII. writing a treatise against Divorces as to suppose that King David was the author of most of the Psalms. The contradiction on the face of it is as clear in the one case as in the other.

How many did he write then? Instead of giving you my own opinion, I will give you the opinion of Prof. Robertson Smith, the author of the article on the Bible in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, one of the most eminent Biblical scholars in the world. He thinks it would be very critical to say that David did not write any. According to his opinion, he may have written the eighteenth and the seventh. He thinks it is probable he wrote them.


The Psalms, however, whoever wrote them, do not depend upon their authorship for their power and beauty. They range from the highest lyrical poetry in the world to mechanical verse without any trace of inspiration. Some are acrostics: the writer begins every line with a certain letter

of the Jewish alphabet. But there are others that bubble up like springs that have their source at the very heart of the world, full of life and sun and joy forever. Some of the Psalms, however, derive a great part of their wealth from association. A Cremona violin is not so valuable when first constructed. After it has been used for years and years, after it has expressed the joy and sorrow of the world, until these have been wrought into it, so that it seems as though it had a soul of its own, then it becomes a valuable instrument,—valuable because of these stored-up vibrations, and worthy of the touch of the grandest master. Precisely so these Psalms have been played upon by human sympathies and hopes and fears and imaginations for centuries, until they are permeated and colored all the way through by the passionate joy and the passionate sorrow of the human heart.

As an illustration how association changes the very interpretation of the passage itself, take that familiar one, "Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." How sweet and fine this thought!—the beauty of holiness, representing a state of culture that is looked on as ideal beauty. Does the author mean that? If I should give you the original meaning, all the spiritual aspiration goes out of it. The writer simply says, I will worship the Lord in the beauty of consecrated garments, with beautiful robes and ritual. But you will never get that idea back into it again; for the heart of the world has written over that line, and filled it with spiritual meaning. So a large part of the wealth of the Psalms is not what the writer put into them, but what the experience of the world has written between the lines.

The Song of Solomon is generally spoken of apologetically. It was a long time after it was written before it was introduced into the canon. As it stands, it is the oldest

book probably in Hebrew literature. It was after the time of Christ before it was admitted as a sacred book. It was cherished in the heart of the people, but they could not get over the fact that it did not appear to be at all religious. They could not find any reason for admitting it to the canon, until at last Rabbi Akiba, a man of overmastering influence, said that the whole world was not worth the day on which that song was given to Israel ; and that fact, together with the idea that it was attributed to Solomon, settled the question, and it was admitted. The probability is that Solomon had nothing to do with it. It is sometimes charged with being an obscene and impure book. There is not a more beautiful or pure poem on the face of the earth. What does it teach? What is its moral? It is a dramatic poem, or as near that as the Jewish genius ever attained, and represents a beautiful country maiden, who is betrothed to a shepherd lad, enduring the blandishments of the courtiers who are endeavoring to lure her from her country lover, and make her the chief figure in the royal harem. In spite of all these blandishments of the gay court and city, she resists, and remains true to her rustic lover, and at last is permitted to go back to her friends, her home, and her love. That is the moral. If any one can find anything impure in that, they could question the purity of a rose in a glass vase on the parlor table. There is nothing particularly religious in this book except this undying faithfulness. Yet the heart of it is true from beginning to end. But do you suppose Solomon would sit down deliberately and write a song in which he would delineate his discomfiture, and set forth how he tried to woo and win a country maiden, and could not succeed, but had to let her go back to her country lover again? People who go through with that experience do not usually set it forth in songs of that fashion. With this



conception, the song is beautiful from beginning to end. Let us pass to Ecclesiastes. This is also one of the last books admitted to the canon. It came in with a great deal of difficulty, and probably would never have been admitted, had it not been that Solomon was supposed to be the author. His name floated it, so that it kept on the surface of Jewish thought; and we may be thankful for the kind of half-fraud which gave his name to the book, because it is an intensely interesting specimen of ancient literature. The writer says, "I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem." Take that last phrase. When Solomon was king, there was no king anywhere else except in Jerusalem. Why should he say that he was king *in Jerusalem*? If a President of the United States should speak of himself, he would not say, when I was President in Washington. There is no president elsewhere: why specify it in that fashion? But, in later times, there was another king at Samaria; and it would be natural for a person in a subsequent period to use such an expression. Again, Solomon would be likely to use the present tense. He was king all the time until he died. He would not write of himself in the past. Again, the writer refers to Judea as a province. It was not a province for hundreds of years after the time of Solomon. If you know the character of the book, you will see with what difficulty it must have been admitted. There is little religious in it. It is pessimistic to the last degree, hopeless of this world, despairing of human society, hopeless of the future. The writer is a fatalist. He says that the world is all vanity and vexation of spirit; that there is nothing in human life; that a person who is dead is better than one living, and one not born better than either of them; that the whole world is empty, one endless round of vanity and vexation. If a person is rich, has many gardens and much increase, he

becomes satiated and tired of it all, and disgusted with life in any form. Animals and man are about on the same level: the same things happen to both; there is no future for either. It is very curious, as Mr. Chadwick has observed in a lecture on this subject, that a passage from this book intimating that there is no future life is placed over the entrance to Mt. Auburn:—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." To any one familiar with Oriental thought, this simply means that the body goes back to the dust, and the spirit, that spark that we call life, goes back and loses its personality, is absorbed in the infinite God from whom it came. That is what that passage means. Thus, the Book of Ecclesiastes was put into the Jewish canon, and became a part of the Bible of Christendom, although it explicitly denies every tenet of Christianity. The name of Solomon floated it in. But, dreary as it is, it represents a phase of human life that finds its echo in the world to-day. It is only fair, however, to say that the last two verses contain a sentiment so noble as to redeem much that is vastly inferior.

Let us now consider perhaps the greatest book in the Old Testament, Job. When was this written? It is supposed that it was written somewhere in the neighborhood of the seventh century. It is an attempt on the part of the writer to consider the oldest and the newest problem of humanity, perennial in its interest, mighty in its hold on the thoughts and hopes and fears of man. He considers the question why it is that good men suffer, why they are in sorrow and trouble, why they are overthrown and cast down, why it is, if there is a righteous government of the universe, that there is no certain prosperity for virtue and truth; that, in spite of the good man's endeavors to do right, he may be cast down


to earth, and trampled under the feet of tyranny, selfishness, and wrong. You will see the nature of the problem to the Jew, when you remember that it was the fundamental idea of his religion that Yahveh was a God of righteousness who would reward the virtuous. As they expressed it, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" ; though I could never help feeling that the writer of that verse had had a narrow experience of life.

The Jews at this time had no real faith in any future life. There are no intimations of it until toward the very last, and then they are dim and indefinite. They teach that God will reward the righteous with long life, with health, with friends, with many children, all the elements of prosperity. That is the reward for serving Yahveh. Yet, in the face of this, they saw the righteous suffering. It was the solution of this problem that was in the mind of the great thinker who wrote this book. It was probably written not long after the death of Josiah, somewhere about 641. He was the king above all others who was their ideal for righteousness and truth, devotion and service to Yahveh. The prophets had long been saying that, when they should have a king true to the law, who should put down idolatry, who should serve Yahveh, they would have prosperity and victory over their enemies. Here, then, was a king faithful and true, from first to last, putting down idolatry, lifting up the law, bringing only good to Israel, yet killed in mid career, and his people overthrown. No wonder that this great loving heart and grand poetic brain, the author of Job, should be stunned and amazed at seeing all his old ideas put to rout. What does it mean? Does Yahveh really rule and care for the world? If he does, why does he permit such contradiction in human affairs? This is the problem. You remember the introduction, where Satan is represented as appearing

before God. The Persian influence had not at that time affected the Jewish belief, and Satan had not developed into a hater of God. He has access to the very court of God himself, and even talks with the Lord on his throne. This introductory scene may very likely have been written by other hands: it does not settle the wonderful problem anyway. It sets forth how Job is suddenly overthrown. It lets us in behind the scenes, and lets us hear the partial solution, though it is not what we should regard as a solution to-day.

The book is dialogue in form, and is made up of conversations between Job and the three friends whom he calls miserable comforters, and an interpolated speech of Elihu. Then, Jehovah himself speaks. The speech of Elihu interrupts the dialogue, but it does not give the solution of the problem. Does the whole book settle the question? Does it give us any answer to this great problem? Not at all. We face the mystery overhanging the world from the beginning until now. When Yahveh appears himself, and speaks out of the whirlwind, what does he say? He does not give any explanation. You have no right to question God. You must bow and submit: that is the only solution which the writer could discover. As one of the Psalmists says, "I was dumb: I opened not my mouth because thou didst it." The Book of Job does not carry us any further.

Have we discovered anything to throw light on that problem since? Only this: it seems to me that the theory of evolution hints an answer such as the world has never discovered before, and which, to my mind, is more rational than any attempted solutions that have been offered. Why do we suffer? I do not believe we suffer in order to test us, because the Almighty and Satan have entered into a controversy whether we will cling to him, if he puts us to trial. I




do not believe we suffer because God appoints this or that amount of pain to us on account of something we have done ; as I heard a tender-hearted mother saying, "Oh, what have I done that God has taken my child away ?" I reject that whole conception of the government of the world. I do not believe that God, because a mother does not go to church, or because she loves her child too much, out of jealousy sends diphtheria or scarlet fever to put the little child to death as a punishment to her. It seems to me infernal, this conception of God. I could not love a Being like that.

What does modern science tell us ? Simply this : that we are surrounded on every hand by a great natural order ; that we are a part of it ; that life and health and happiness come as the result of our conformity to this law and order. If I keep the laws of my physical life I am well, if I break them I am sick ; and neither praying nor cursing has anything to do with the question whether poison is wholesome or bread is injurious. Pain is a signal marked "Danger," set up along our pathway on every hand. If we step from this pathway, consciously or unconsciously ; if we break a law voluntarily or by the force of inheritance,—pain, disease, death, come as necessity. Pain means broken law. Welfare and happiness mean law kept ; and the result of this is to teach us progressively through the ages to know and keep the laws of the universe, in which are life and peace forevermore.

## The Bridge between the Testaments.

---

As you open any one of our common Bibles, you will find that there is a break between the Old Testament and the New which has been filled by the binder with only the blank leaves for a family record. This break has been, in the popular mind, a blank for hundreds of years, as much so as the unwritten leaves. Yet something of vast moment must have happened between the closing of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, which we must understand in order to appreciate the movements which are so alive on the scene of the New Testament record. This break is no slight one, as you will see when your attention is called to the dates. The date of the prophecy of Malachi is placed in the Bible, in the margin, as 397 B.C. That is, our Bible gives us the impression that the Old Testament closed nearly four hundred years before the New Testament began. If you ascertain the date of the first writings of the New Testament, you will find it was somewhere between fifty and sixty years after the birth of Christ. Here is a gulf apparently of four hundred and fifty years between the Old Testament and the New. It was years, in my own case, before I had looked up this matter enough to have any comprehension of what had been taking place during those centuries which must have united these two periods of time. In order that you may see how important must have been the



activities going on, I shall ask you to note two or three particularly marked things.

When the Old Testament closed, there was no trace anywhere of any belief, on the part of the Jews, in any doctrine of immortality, in any heaven or hell. The New Testament is full of both. There was no trace anywhere, at the end of Malachi, of any developed doctrine of angels, good or bad. The New Testament is full of the hierarchies of good angels, under their leader, and, over against them, the hierarchies of bad angels, under the fully developed Satan, or Devil. When we have finished the Old Testament, we have learned nothing about any kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, as to be expected very soon on the earth. The very first cry that meets us as we open the New Testament is, "The kingdom of God is at hand." When the Old Testament closes, there are almost no traces anywhere of an immediate expectation of the Messiah. The New Testament seems to begin with the Messianic cry in the hearts and on the lips of all the people. So the words "grace" and "sin" and the idea of the atonement, and all these things with which the New Testament is filled, had found no clear and definite expression at the close, or what was supposed to be the close, of the Old Testament record.

But there is danger of our having an entire misconception of the facts, if we suppose that there is really a very long break between the records of the Old and New Testaments. A large part of this misconception comes from the mistakes that have been made in regard to the dates of the records. For example, the Old Testament canon was not closed 397 B.C., although this is the popularly regarded date of the prophecy of Malachi. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament canon was not closed until after the destruction of the temple, nearly a hundred years after the birth of Christ; and

it was closed at this time, not because all those books which were regarded as worthy to be reckoned in its number had been included, but because the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the Jews among the peoples, as the result of their conquest by the Romans, made it impossible for them any longer to carry on this religious and literary activity. Only those books, then, which had become sacred in the minds of the people at the time of the destruction of their nationality, were looked upon as belonging to the old and sacred period of their history, and about them gathered this halo of antiquity and respect which always belongs to those things which are revered as part of a nation's past.

The Book of Malachi was not the last of the Old Testament. Several of those books which are included in the canon date long after the prophecy of Malachi. The Book of Daniel, of Ecclesiastes, and several others, were of more recent date than that prophecy.

There is a large body of literature, the name of which you may be familiar with, that has not been included in either the Old Testament or the New by Protestant Christianity, although a part has been accepted by the Catholic Church, which fills up this apparent gulf between the two Testaments. This literature shows a development of religious and political life among the Jews, and explains what must otherwise be a great mystery. A part of this literature goes under the name of apocalyptic writings, and a part under the name of apocryphal writings. Apocryphal means hidden, and apocalyptic means just the opposite, unfolded or revealed. The apocalyptic literature was so named, because it was supposed in some way to lift the veil which hides the future, and in a series of shadowy outlines to picture the great events that were to come. The writers of these visions did not expose themselves to detection by being over-definite in drawing the

outlines of coming events. They have written them in so cloudy and indefinite a fashion that it has been a question with interpreters in all ages as to whether this precise picture or that was supposed to refer to one historic event or another.

The apocryphal literature would be well worthy an hour's study in your presence, had we time. A large part of it is so very noble, so splendidly written, so full of fine ideas, that it can only be the result of an accident that it is not a part of the Old Testament itself.

I intimated that the canon was closed suddenly by the destruction of the Jewish nationality, and that, but for this, the Book of Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon, the histories of the Maccabees, and others of these powerful works, would undoubtedly have appeared in the Old Testament canon. As we study these books, there is no reason that we can see why they should not have been included, so far as we can judge of their intrinsic worth. They are certainly much superior to some parts of the Old Testament. Some parts of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon are quite equal to anything that goes by the name of sacred Scripture in any of the religious writings of the world.

We cannot admit, of course, that this apparent break between the Testaments is a real cessation of Jewish life, activity, and development. We are now accustomed to the modern word "evolution," to a belief in the continuity of growth,—that nothing happens suddenly, or without a cause, or springs full-grown out of nothing.

If, for example, we had no history of this country from the time when the Pilgrims landed until the Boston harbor "tea-party" or the battle of Lexington,—if it was all unwritten, so that we left off with their landing at Plymouth, and began again at the beginning of the Revolution,—we should have no sort of doubt or question as to whether there

had been most intense political and intellectual activity on the part of the people during this time. We should have to assume a line of continuous development from one point to the other. Precisely the same is true concerning the history and development of the Jews. We cannot understand the beginning of the New Testament life and literature, unless we assume an intense activity on the part of the Jews during this period, which is not covered by that which we are accustomed to call sacred literature.

There are two possible courses open to me this morning. I could take up this apocalyptic and apocryphal literature, and outline it, giving you specimens of its contents, analyze them, show what these writers were thinking about, and point out their effect on the popular life; but this would lead me too far and into too minute details, and would make the subject wearisome. On the other hand, I can simply give you results. I can tell you what we have learned by studying this old history and literature. I can tell you what the Jews were doing politically, intellectually, socially, and religiously, and in this way enable your thoughts to cross this great gulf from the Old Testament to the New.

Leaving on one side, then, except as I may refer to it incidentally, this whole mass of literature, I will give you, in as brief and clear outline as I can, the history of what the Jews were doing during this most important period of their history and development.

In the first place, let me tell you the political vicissitudes through which they passed, because these led the way to the other changes; and it is necessary to know them, in order to comprehend their later movements.

When the Jews first returned from the Babylonish captivity, they were under a Persian protectorate. That is, these exiles returned home by permission of the Persian king, and

under the escort and guidance of Persians, protected by Persian power. They were permitted by Persian authority to rebuild their temple, and to renew, as far as possible, their old-time life. They were under this power continuously, and at peace for a long number of years. They enjoyed practical independence during that time. The Persians were so far away that the kings did not care to interfere with them, and they were allowed to develop according to their own ideas. Their chief priest, or high priest, was practically the supreme power. Of course, if any conflict arose, the people would have the right to appeal to Persia, so that the Persian king was the ultimate authority in all political questions ; but, practically, the Jews were independent. They remained in this way until that young Grecian king, Alexander, started in his great career of conquest. On his way to the East, he took Jerusalem as one of the great cities in his course, and conquered the Judæan power, bringing it to his feet and leaving it as one of his subjects, while he went farther east to break down the entire Persian rule in all its range.

After Alexander's death, this great world-wide kingdom broke up into four pieces. Judæa fell to the share of Ptolemy, the ruler of Egypt ; and, for a long time, we find Judæa a dependency of Egypt. About this time, the great city of Alexandria was built as the capital of the Ptolemies. It soon became one of the most famous cities of the world, the seat of commerce and of literature. It was one of the great centres of learning, and exerted an influence throughout the world. It was a great cosmopolitan city. Greeks, Romans, Jews, Egyptians, Orientals of every name, centred here, and formed this great seething, political, intellectual, and religious life. It was during the reign of the Ptolemies that the Old Testament was translated into the Greek version called the Septuagint. This Greek translation of the

Old Testament is the one that is always referred to in the New Testament, when quotations are made there. So that, if you find that these quotations are different from the Old Testament, you may understand this difference, by remembering that they quoted from the Septuagint, which sometimes differs in words and phrases from the ordinary reading of the Hebrew.

After the Jews had been under the reign of the Ptolemies in Egypt, they passed under a new conqueror, the Syrian kings, or dynasty of the Seleucidæ, of whom the representative at that time was Antiochus Epiphanes, or Antiochus the brilliant, who was nicknamed, on account of his strange and unaccountable ways, Epimanes, or the madman. He did everything he could to denationalize the Jews. He abolished their temple worship. He made it obligatory upon every Jew to worship the gods of Greece and the gods of Greece alone. He did everything he could to pour contempt on the temple, even going so far as to sacrifice swine upon the altar, the last and extremest indignity, in the eye of a Jew, which could be committed against his national worship.

He not only sacrificed this animal upon the altar of the temple, but, making a broth of the remains, he sprinkled it over their sacred books and utensils, doing whatever he could to defile everything that they called sacred. He carried this so far, however, that he defeated the very purpose he had in view ; for one day, as a renegade Jew was about to offer a pagan sacrifice, Mattathias rushed on him and slew him. This started a revolution, which ran like wild-fire all over the country. It resulted in the Jews attaining their freedom, and becoming a nation again by themselves. The son of Mattathias, Judas, the Hammer, as he was called, became king. He beat his enemies to pieces, established a new dynasty, and for many years the Jews

ruled themselves, and were independent. But, by and by, they formed an alliance with that new power in the West, which was so soon destined to rule the whole world. When two rival claimants for the Jewish throne were quarrelling as to the succession, Rome stepped in, and assumed a protectorate, which meant their subjection; and, from that time on to the destruction of the Jewish city, Judæa was only a province of the Roman Empire, ruled a part of the time by kings appointed in Rome, a part of the time by Roman procurators and other officers of the Empire.

So much for an outline of the political history. You see how active were those times concerning which we have known so very little, and how and what were the influences at work which mingled not only the nationalities, but the philosophies and religions of the world in such a way as to prepare for the development of a new religion.

Mark for a moment how these influences were at work. Here were brought together, in these great cities of Rome and Alexandria, peoples from all over the world, each with its own religion, each worshipping its own separate gods. And as they grew wiser, and thought more deeply about this subject, do you not see how scepticism must have resulted? Whose god was the true one? Here were a hundred gods; here were many religions represented in these great cities. A man could take his choice, and worship this or that; but it was impossible for him to believe in them all. When the question was raised, Which one shall I believe in? the answer was likely to be, In none. The system each religion represented was so vulnerable, the gods were so clearly only the idealizations of national hopes and aspirations, that the people of no one nation could receive the gods of another; and so they finally ceased to be respected, even by their own followers.

The systems of philosophy and all the ideas of the world were also brought together and compared one with another, so that they might be comprehended, that they might be tested, to see which were capable of standing.

Among the great movements going on in the intellectual development of the Jews was the attempt to reconcile the doctrines of Judaism with the great philosophies of Greece. Philo, who lived in Alexandria, a Jewish scholar of the century preceding the birth of Christ, is the most distinguished name of this epoch of Jewish life. He spent his life in endeavoring to reconcile the philosophy of Plato with the Old Testament ideas, attempting to find traces in these higher pagan philosophies of some primitive revelation that should bring their thought into connection with that of his old-time fathers. Out of this fusion of ideas sprang many of those conceptions which became living forces in the New Testament thought and in the development of the young Christianity. Not only was there a fusion of Jewish and Grecian ideas, but also of Oriental and Gnostic speculations. These philosophies were compared, and possible relations sought out ; and thus there was formed in the popular mind a preparation for a new development, something to come that had not yet been understood or known.

I wish now to point out one or two other lines of growth which were going on in the Jewish mind and life.

As we open the New Testament, we find everywhere mention of the synagogues. Jesus, whenever he visits any little town, goes into the synagogue ; and, when the roll of Old Scripture is unfolded and read, he rises and speaks to the people. There is no trace of a synagogue in the Old Testament. This, then, is an entirely new development in religion. Between the time when the Old Testament closed and the New began, the synagogue had arisen. It occupied

a large part of the national life,—larger than even the temple worship. Every little village had its synagogue; and, in Jerusalem, they could be counted by the hundred. There were as many synagogues as there are churches in the most populous of our Christian countries to-day. What were they? Simply little meeting-houses; places where the people came together on the Sabbath day, and listened to the reading of the Old Testament scriptures. And then, after the reading, just as in a modern Quaker meeting, any one was at liberty to stand up and comment on the passage that had been read, and give utterance to whatever religious opinions or thoughts he might have in his mind. This development bears in a most important way upon the growth of the Christian Church. The synagogue is the direct parent and predecessor of the Christian Church. It is undoubtedly true that, if there had never been a synagogue, there never would have been a church; if there never had been a scribe, there never would have been a minister; for the scribe was attached to the synagogue, and was the man who copied or made the rolls of the Law, the man whose business it was to understand the Law and interpret it to the people. The Law, as you know, is in the old Hebrew; and at this time the Hebrew language had ceased to be spoken or written by the people. The common language was the Aramaic. It was spoken by Jesus and his apostles. It was neither Hebrew nor Greek, but a new dialect. The Scripture passages were read and translated, and comments made upon them by the scribe; and you therefore see how naturally his work precedes that which the Christian minister has done for the last eighteen hundred years.

Along with this development of the synagogue, this sort of communal religious life of the people, there was a development of sects and parties among the Jews that we need

to understand. There are, in the later time, references to the Sadducees, the Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, Hellenists, or Grecians, the Herodians, and the Essenes. In the Old Testament, you find no traces of any of them. They had all grown up during this time between the Old Testament and the New.

What were these parties? We are accustomed to speak of the Sadducees as sceptics. I think this is the popular idea of them,—that they were the New Testament sceptics.

We are accustomed to say that they did not believe in any thing,—that they did not believe in angels, in a resurrection, nor in any future life. Yet we shall make a capital mistake, if we think of them as sceptics at all. The Sadducees were simply the old, respectable, titled, wealthy conservatives among the Jews. They were typical conservatives. They did not believe in angels, or the resurrection, or spirits, or the future life. Why? Because the Old Scriptures, which they stood by, and were ready to fight for through thick and thin, did not teach any of these ideas. They stood by the Law, by Moses, by all that which was oldest and most respectable in national life. They rejected all these new-fangled ideas, as they regarded them.

Who were the Pharisees? I used to think of them as the conservatives, but they were the precise opposites. They were the popular party that was ready to accept new ideas. They represented best the national life of the time. They were the ones who not only believed in Moses, but in the traditions; and the traditions gave them an opportunity to incorporate into their belief, and to accept as a part of their religious convictions, a thousand things that the Old Scriptures never had said. They were the popular party among the people.

I have told you who the scribes were. The lawyers were

substantially the same as the scribes,—not lawyers like ours of to-day, but interpreters of the Old Testament law.

The Hellenists formed a party which would naturally spring up as they came into contact with Grecian ideas and learning. They believed that they ought to break down their Jewish exclusiveness, that they ought to study Hellenistic literature. They were of course very unpopular with those who believed in keeping exclusively the old ideas and old-time national life.

Then there was the great party of the Essenes, only referred to incidentally in the New Testament. They lived a life of seclusion. They were something like the modern Shakers, very simple and pure in manners, hospitable and gentle. They have been suspected of being connected in some way with Oriental ideas, perhaps with Buddhism; and it is a serious question whether they have not had more to do with the Christian Church than they have had credit for. It is at least a curious fact that, as soon as churches sprang up all through the Roman Empire, the little sect of the Essenes disappeared, and were never seen again.

Passing from a consideration of these sects among the Jews, let me give you a little more definite idea as to where a great many of the popular ideas in the New Testament came from, and how they came into being during this period of which we have so little record in our hands. I refer to the theories of the kingdom of heaven, of angels, of the resurrection, of the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, of the judgment, of heaven and hell, and all these things which are so common now in Christian thought. There is no trace of them, as I have told you, in the Old Testament. Where did they come from? They were not, the larger part of them, native developments of Jewish thought alone. Nearly all of them were borrowed from the

Persian. They were the results of the life which the Jews led during their captivity. Among the Persians, and the Oriental nations from whom the Persians themselves derived many of their ideas, these conceptions were full-grown perhaps before the time of Moses himself.

Very soon after the coming home of the Jews from Babylon there crept into their thought this belief of a great hierarchy of angels good and bad in perpetual conflict. From this comes the idea of the New Testament devil in perpetual conflict with God. We find, growing up in the apocalyptic books, especially in Enoch, which is full of these ideas, the full development of a belief in a judgment to come, of Messiah coming in the clouds of heaven, in a separation of the good and the bad after that judgment, of an eternity of blessedness and an eternity of punishment, expressed in almost the same language which we find afterward on the lips of Jesus himself. Almost all these ideas were apparently developed from seeds which were planted in Jewish thought during the time the Jews came in contact with the great Persian power.

I want to lay the emphasis of this part of my theme on the question of the Messiah and the part it played in Jewish thought and life. If there had been no dream of a Messiah, there would have been no Christianity. It is very important, then, to inquire where this idea came from, and how much it had to do with the development of their later thought and life.

If we confine ourselves to the Old Testament, we find no clear doctrine of a Messiah at all. We do find this, however, which was a preparation of the soil for the reception of the seed, which developed into the thought of the Messiah. The Jews believed — and it was necessary, holding the idea of God and his government that they did — that

---

they were to be prospered, that a kingdom was to be established which should be permanently blessed, whenever the time should come that the people were faithful to the law of their God. They did not believe in any future life: they believed in prosperity in this life as a reward of goodness. Here is the germ which developed into the doctrine of the Messiah; but there is no trace of their believing in the coming of any personal king, only that the kingdom after the idea of David's rule should be restored. But this idea of a pre-existent Angel-Messiah, who should come as the angel of God to rule the world, was a common Persian thought; and I believe that this idea among the Jews can be traced to their connection with this Oriental religion. Here, then, we find the next great step in the doctrine of the Messianic idea.

The next step is simply to identify this supposed supernatural being with some one actually come. You will see then why it was that, when Jesus was born, the people were expecting the coming of the Messiah. They were being true, as never before, to the law of Jehovah. They believed, according to the fundamental idea of their religion, that this must bring them prosperity. They had accepted the idea that a kingdom was to come, and that some one sent of God, either a divine or an ideal man, was to rule over the chosen people; that he was to come and sit in judgment on all the earth; that the dead were to be raised, and that the end of the world was to come; and that he was to usher in a new and grand heavenly kingdom that should be without end. They were looking then on every hand for the Messiah. It was Lo here! and Lo there! And the first thing asked of Jesus, when he preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, was, Art thou the Messiah, the one we have expected? or shall we look for another? So, if Jesus was to play any part

in bringing in the kingdom of heaven, he must be considered as this expected Messiah. The rôle of Messiah was thrust upon him. He was to be the agent of God to bring in the kingdom of heaven. The people would accept no other.

I believe, then, that the time had come, in the history of the world, when a new religion had to be born. The people had lost faith in the old ones. They had lost faith in their old philosophy, in all their old conceptions of God and man. There was an earnest expectation on the part of the people all over the world of some new development of another type, and a higher type, of life. So I believe that, if Jesus had never been born, we should have had Christianity still, or something substantially like it. For the ideas and anticipations of Christianity were in the popular heart and mind, filling all the air. It only needed that they should centre in or crystallize about some person who should be accepted as the Messiah; and, had this person not been Jesus, some other person must be found. I think this is clear, when we study the writings of Paul. Paul is the actual father of historic Christianity; but Paul never saw Jesus, except in a vision. He says very little about what Jesus said or did. His writings are full of the ideal Messiah, but he takes almost no note of Jesus of Nazareth. It is this new revelation from God, this new head of a new Christianity, with which Paul deals. Thus, we find all these influences, which had been at work during the time of which we have no record in our Scriptures, culminating at last, naturally and necessarily, in the birth of a new religion, and that new religion the one that we call Christian.

## THE EPISTLES.

---

As we come from the Old Testament to the New, we notice that there are four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles that lead the list of those books that have come to be regarded as canonical. It is worthy your note, in passing, that the Acts of the Apostles does not treat in any general way of the doings of the twelve apostles, but only concerns itself with certain passages in the life chiefly of Peter and Paul. The significance of that I shall refer to later.

As I wish to treat of the New Testament, in a general way in the order of time, rather than the order in which the publishers have happened to place the books, I pass by the Gospels and the Acts and come to the Epistles ; for you are probably aware of the fact that nearly all the Epistles, the principal ones most certainly, were written some time before any of the Gospels were brought into their present condition.

When the First Epistle was written, which was probably the first Epistle of Paul to the Church in Thessalonica, Jesus had been dead but about twenty years. That is, the people were then about as far away from his time as we are from the time of Abraham Lincoln, and, of course, there would be a great many persons alive who had either seen Jesus, or who had seen somebody that had seen him,—enough to keep alive and fresh the traditions of the principal events in his life, the principal phases of his doctrine,

and the generally believed account of his death. We must bear in mind, however, all the way through, that these early churches did not believe that Jesus was really dead, but only that he had been withdrawn into the heavens for a little time, whence he was to return again in the clouds, accompanied by an innumerable retinue of angels, to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to usher in the new kingdom of God which he was to establish here upon earth. I refer to this only to show you the general intellectual and religious atmosphere of the time when these Epistles were written.

There is another point to be noted. You will find that these letters are written to the Church in Philippi, to the Church in Ephesus, to the Church in Galatia, to the Church in Rome, etc. That is, and this is the point, the first churches, as we should naturally expect, were organized in the great cities scattered over the Roman Empire, the principal centres of intellectual life and thought. I refer to this, so as to bring you into sympathy with the natural growth of these churches, that you may see how, under ordinary human laws, they happened to be what they were.

In process of time, those who rejected the claims of Christianity came to be called pagans and heathen. Did you ever think why? The word "pagan" is from a Latin word *paganus*, which means a villager. The word "heathen" is simply heath-men, men who lived out on the heath, peasants. This suggestion is mainly interesting, as I think, because it lets us into the secret, which is true to-day just as it was then, that any new movement always finds its first footing in the town, where thought is most active, where opinions are most fluent, where it is easier to get a hearing for a new idea, and where a new thought first finds lodgement in the minds and activities of men. However sturdy and noble and grand the coun-

try may be in the make-up of its moral fibre, yet it is always a little behind the town. Just as last year's fashions are this year's fashions in the country, so the intellectual and religious fashions follow this same law: they start in the centre of intellectual activity, and then spread slowly toward the country.

These churches, then, these new organizations, were dotted here and there over the Roman Empire in the great centres of commercial and intellectual activity. They were not, as yet,—between 50 and 60 A.D., when the first Epistles were written,—very numerous, very large, or very powerful.

These little churches were simply made up of the few men who had accepted the claims of the new Messiah, and who, while they were waiting for his immediate return,—for both Jesus and Paul taught explicitly that he was to come back before that generation had entirely passed away,—would naturally place little emphasis on the affairs of this world. It is not strange, therefore, that they established practical communism, selling their houses and lands, just as in modern times Millerites have done, believing that the world was coming to an end in three, five, or ten years. What was the use of laying out schemes of business, plans for the regeneration of this world, social or political improvements? What was the use of being troubled, if Cæsar was a tyrant and was ruling the world? What was the use of mourning about these things? So Paul tells them not to be troubled, for the time is short, and the end is at hand. Therefore, they sold their property, and tried to make one another as comfortable as possible, establishing these little brotherhoods in the great centres of activity, and then, laboring and doing their daily duty as best they could, awaited the coming of the kingdom of God with its heavenly magnificence and glory. In the face of a belief like that, of course it would not occur to any one to

—

write any Gospels. What did they want of Gospels? The people who were living already knew about Jesus, and some of them were to live until he came again. So they did not take the trouble to make any record of his life and teachings at that time.

But you will see how naturally the Epistles arose. Here were these churches, perplexed on every hand by practical questions. They had just come out of heathenism. In those days, if you were to dine with a heathen, the chances were that he would go through some religious ceremony preceding the feast, to consecrate the animal that he was to have for his dinner. It was a very vital question, then, whether the new Christians were to be permitted to attend such feasts, and eat the meat that had been offered to idols; whether in so doing they became accomplices in idolatry. You remember how often Paul refers to this. They questioned, also, whether it was necessary to keep the Mosaic law, and they looked to their leaders for answers. Those who had seen Jesus, or who had received traditions of him from others' lips, could have him for guidance in this matter; but others did not know just what they were required to believe, and all sorts of practical questions would naturally spring up while they were waiting for his second coming. It was to answer these difficulties and to solve these practical problems that the Epistles came to be written.

We must remember another thing. It is absurd for anybody to suppose that Paul or Peter or James, or any of the writers of the Epistles, ever had the slightest idea that these letters would become a part of a book, to be referred to as a standard of belief and doctrine eighteen hundred years after that time. And this absurdity appears in what I have already stated, that they expected the world to come to an end before the people who wrote the letters were dead.

They expected Jesus to come again to earth, and reign again as their king, for at least a thousand years. This idea is still thrilling and throbbing through parts of the New Testament, especially the Apocalypse, or the Book of Revelation. It is all on tiptoe with this upward and onward looking for the coming of the Lord. When Jesus should come, there would be no reason, and almost no need, of any book to announce his will; for he himself would be the living king, dispensing his own law and executing his own judgments.

These letters, then, were simply temporary and local expedients to meet the exigencies of that time. If you read them carefully in the light of that idea, you will find nearly all your perplexities solved. It is not my purpose to go into minute criticism of one Epistle after another. Instead of any textual criticism, I wish to give some general ideas for which they stand; but it is worth my while to point out first one or two significant facts concerning a few of them.

Take the little Epistle of Jude. Jude says that he was the brother of James. He was not himself an apostle, but, perhaps, the brother of an apostle. There is one thing in that little letter which of itself is sufficient to forever render absurd any claim for the entire infallibility of the Bible. I have spoken to a great many orthodox ministers concerning it, who had never had their attention called to it. I spoke to you last Sunday concerning the Book of Enoch,—a wild, crude, unreliable, apocalyptic book, written within a hundred years of the time of Christ. Jude quotes it as being the work of the old patriarch, “the seventh from Adam.” Here is a palpable blunder.

The Epistle of James was written apparently to offset Paul’s doctrine of “justification by faith.” James evidently thought Paul was pushing that too far. He said it was well

enough to have faith, but you must supplement faith and manifest the reality of that faith by works, or it becomes dead and fruitless. This was the first general contribution to the seething discussion of the age.

There is no occasion for me to say anything concerning the three Epistles of John, except that there is little reason to suppose John the Apostle wrote them. Neither need I detain you with a special reference to the writings known as the Epistles of Peter. The second certainly was not written by him, and it is doubtful about the first ; but it makes little difference to us.

Concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews, ordinarily called the work of Paul, there is hardly a scholar in the world who thinks that Paul wrote it. It devotes itself to an endeavor to justify Christianity to those who had come out from the Jewish Church. It shows how the old dispensation was preparatory to Christianity; that every thing prefigured it; that it represented the symbol and shadow of which Christianity is the substance and reality. This, you will see, must have met a very pressing need or want at that time, when one of the most important and practical questions of the Jew was whether, when he became a Christian, he was false to the old and divine dispensation which had been given to his fathers.

I wish now to confine myself entirely to the attitude and work of Paul. Paul is the great name in historic Christianity, second only in rank and dignity to that of Jesus, and not even second to him in the power which he has exerted over thought. Instead, however, of going into a general examination of the Epistles, I want, in some general, graphic way, to give you Paul's attitude toward the universe, to set forth the scheme which he held, and which he made a vital power in the development of civilization. There is no man

in all the past ages more alive to-day than Paul, or who is having more to do with men that have never thought very much about it, and who have least appreciated the significance of the work which he wrought.

It is not necessary for my purpose that I should discuss all the questions that have been mooted by the critics as to whether he wrote all the Epistles that have passed under his name. It does not make any special difference to our consideration, for the doctrines we care to note are taught in the Epistles which are undoubtedly his.

In the first place, then, in order to understand this Pauline doctrine, you must remember that he was a grand, sturdy, unfaltering believer in predestination of the most cast-iron sort. No man who ever lived has taught it more explicitly and clearly than he. God is the absolute sovereign, and he has a right through all the eternities to do whatever he will; and puny, short-sighted man has no right to question it. This is the attitude of Paul. God has a perfect right, to use his figure, to take one lump of clay, and make a vase to hold flowers in the parlor: he has a right to take another lump, and make a coarse, crude pot for use in the kitchen; and neither lump has a right to say anything about it one way or the other. He has a right to make one man for one use, and another for another,—to predestinate one to success and glory, to predestinate another to failure and disaster; and these have no right to question either the wisdom or justice of the dispensation. But, in justice to Paul, I wish you to note that the outcome of his doctrine is quite different from that of Calvin and modern Orthodoxy.

The next great doctrine of Paul is his uncompromising, unhesitating acceptance of the legend that teaches the fall of man. Adam, the first man, stood as the earthly head of humanity up to his time. The doctrine of the "federal head-

ship," as it has come to be called in theology, is undoubtedly a Pauline doctrine. Man, with Adam at the head up to the time of the birth of Christ, had been simply a disastrous failure. In Adam, all died ; through Adam came sin ; through Adam came sorrow ; through Adam came all the disasters that have ever afflicted poor, suffering humanity. Paul, of course, had none of the means of knowledge at the disposal of any intelligent man in the modern world. He did not know, therefore, that death had reigned not only since Adam and over all his descendants, but for some thousands and millions of years before Adam was ever thought of. He did not know that suffering and pain had been in existence, not only among men, but in the animal world for millions of years. If he had, he would have had no more faith in the doctrine of the fall than I have. But Paul believed in the federal headship of Adam ; that he was the representative and leader of the world up to that time, and that, under his headship, the world had been a failure. Naturally, then, he turned to some scheme of recovery. He desired to find some way in which this long failure could be turned into success. He desired to find some method, a part of the secret council and fore-knowledge of God,—for not only the fall, but the redemption was part of the predestination of Paul,—by which a new order of things could be instituted, and the world be ultimately crowned with success.

Here, then, we are led to consider Paul's view of Christ. There is another thing also, at the outset, to which I wish to call your careful attention ; for people seem to read the Bible in a blindfold and sleepy way, if they read it at all,—never thinking of comparing part with part, or treating it as they would treat any other book, or as they should, if they wish to learn anything from it. I was taught in this way myself. I was taught to read so many verses as so much religious

duty accomplished ; so many square inches of Bible, so much goodness. Thus, people read the Bible, never using their brains and common sense about it.

We need now to consider Paul's attitude toward Christ,—toward Christ, not toward Jesus ; for it is hardly too much to say that Paul made no account of the personal Jesus whatever. I want to make that distinction clear. Paul does not have anything to say about Jesus. The only time he quotes his words is when he gives the story of the Last Supper, and, in another place, where he quotes a saying from Jesus that does not appear in the Gospels. He does not anywhere say anything about what Jesus did. He has not a hint anywhere of any miraculous conception. He speaks of no miracles in the modern sense of that word. He only refers in a general way to signs and wonders. But he believed that "speaking with tongues," that incoherent gibberish and babbling, was a miracle; so you can understand what he meant when he spoke of signs and wonders. He says nothing about his raising people from the dead or feeding the multitude. Yet you must remember that he stood nearest to Jesus of all who wrote of him in the New Testament. It is strange that he should not allude to these things in all of his Epistles. There is not a trace of his having any personal love for Jesus, the man. He says, frankly and distinctly, that he never saw him, except in a vision ; and he makes so little account of these things that, when he comes up to Jerusalem and talks over the condition of the early Church with the apostles, he says they had nothing to tell him that he cared anything about,—to use his own phrase, they "added nothing" to him. He refers to the apostles very slightly, "those who seemed to be somewhat," to be pillars. He speaks of them with hardly disguised antagonism and irony ; and he was in antagonism with

them the most of his life. You see how little account he makes of the historic Jesus. What does he make account of? Of the theologic Christ as standing for a part of the scheme of the divine economy in the salvation of the world.

There are three distinct stages of progress very perceptible in Paul's writings, as illustrating three stages of growth in his mind concerning the doctrine of Christ. In the first place, he is converted to the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. But he does not stop there. We find at the last that he had risen to the belief that Jesus was a pre-existent being; that he was the Angel-Messiah; that he was the first-born of every creature; that he was the beginning of the creation of God, and only less than God himself. But the great thing that he believed, whether he called him Messiah or pre-existent angel or head of the Church, was that Jesus was the head of a new and renovated humanity.

I have told you what Paul believed about Adam, that he was the head of the race that was a failure. Over against Adam, the old man, he sets Christ, the new man, revealed from heaven as the new head of the new humanity. This is the most significant thing in the whole belief of Paul, so far as his doctrine of Christ is concerned. He was the head of the new order of humanity. Those who became engrafted into the Church, those who became followers and disciples of Christ, put off the old idea of Adam, sloughed off their whole association with the old and false order of humanity, and became members of this new race,—the redeemed and renovated Church of God. This is the doctrine of Paul concerning Christ.

I said, a little while ago, that the predestination taught by Paul had a far different outcome for the history of this world from that taught by Calvin and the orthodox churches of the

---

day. He teaches that the fall of man and the redemption are parts of the one divine plan of him who, as a sovereign, works his eternal will. But he held so grand a conception of God that he believed it is a part of this sovereign will that the world ultimately, this whole groaning, travailing, weeping, and crying creation, shall be redeemed. So he teaches that the Jews were rejected and outcast only as a temporary thing, only as the occasion of the bringing in of the Gentiles. He teaches that, when by and by the Gentiles are all brought in, then the Jews also are to be reclaimed; and then, under Christ, there is no longer to be any Jew or Greek, any civilized or barbarian. They are all to be one as parts of this new humanity. Christ is to be the head of it, and all the world is to be brought into one under his headship. Then, at the last, Christ is to deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God is to be all and in all.


Ultimately, then, Paul was both a Universalist and a Unitarian; for, although he teaches the pre-existence of this Christ, he teaches plainly his subordination to God, and, as the final outcome of everything, that he is to give up the kingdom to the one God, and all men are to be part of this kingdom. This is the outcome of Paul's doctrine of predestination.

I have left to the last that which is the grandest work that Paul wrought,—a work as grand as that which almost any man has ever wrought in the history of humanity.

I said in the beginning that there were two factions in the early churches. It was inevitable that there should be. Here were these Jews who had been taught and trained for ages into the belief that the Mosaic dispensation was not only divine, but eternal; that, on the basis of this, a new kingdom, after the type of the kingdom of David, was to be established, and the Jews were to rule over the world for-

ever. But here comes in a new claimant, a new Messiah, as those who accepted the Messianic doctrine believed. And here comes Paul, organizing churches all over the Roman Empire, and saying that this divine dispensation of Judaism is obsolete and outgrown. It is very natural that it should require some time to accept so strange a doctrine as that. James said, the old first church at Jerusalem said, all the apostles said, You must also keep the law of Moses, or you cannot be saved. They sent their emissaries after Paul all over the Roman Empire, because they regarded him as the most dangerous heretic of the age. They felt that he was trying to do good, but that he was teaching false doctrine in saying that it was not necessary to keep the law of Moses. After a while, they found that they had to compromise, and they said, You do not have to keep all, but there are certain things you must keep ; and, for a long time, they still clung to the idea of the shadow after they had given up the substance. It was ages before they gave up the notion that a Jewish Christian was not better than a Gentile one. They believed that there was an advantage in having been born in the Jewish religion. This was the origin of the great division in the Church, with Peter at the head on the one hand, and Paul at the head on the other. For a great many years, this discussion rent the Church in twain and almost threatened its existence. You find traces of it throughout the New Testament, one party hitting at the other, and that in turn striking back ; Paul striking hard blows on one side, and his opponents returning them on the other.

The Acts of the Apostles is a very late book. It was written after this warfare between the two churches had practically died out. It was a sort of compromise, written by somebody who wanted to unite these two factions. You will notice a strange parallelism between the sayings and



doings of Paul and Peter in this book. If, in one chapter, Paul is represented as doing something wonderful, you will find Peter doing as strange a thing in the next. This book is evidently written for the express purpose of healing over this division in the Church and doing justice to both sides.

But, now, what is the point of the grand work that Paul did? If it had not been for Paul, we might not have had an historic Christianity. We should certainly have had a very different one, and not so good a one as that which we have had. It would have been impossible for the early apostles to have forced upon the Roman Empire not only a belief in Jesus, but also the practice of all the ritual of the Jews. If they had attempted that, the whole effort would have broken down, and Christianity would have been merely a new sect of Judaism confined to a few followers. But Paul, with his views, felt that the hour of the Mosaic ritual had struck. The past had been a failure, or at most only a type, a shadow leading on to Christ, the head of the new humanity. And so he said: The works of the law, that neither you nor your fathers could keep, are dead rubbish, to be swept away. So he dispensed with sacrifices and the Jewish Sabbath, and it may be noted he did not say anything about any other. You need not pay any attention to the laws of Moses, he said. They are all gone by. They are only a shadow leading to Christ; and, now that Christ has come, everything is summed up in faith in him. And so arose Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. He became the liberator of the world, and we are to rank him as hardly second among the great men who have snapped the shackles that have bound the freedom of the human race. Paul broke off this enclosing shell of Moses, and set civilization free. This doctrine of justification by faith was the weapon with which he did it; for he said: Whether you are

Jew or Gentile, it does not make any difference. Only appropriate and incorporate into your own life the life of this new Christ. Do it by faith. If you believe and accept, you are a part of this new dispensation of God. And so Jew and Gentile, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, no matter who, any man who accepted Christ, became a part of this new kingdom of heaven; and thus all the petty, worrying, wearing, exacting, ritualistic ceremonies of the Jews were abolished at one stroke. Paul's belief in salvation by faith was not a mere petty intellectual assent to an idea. It was with him a believing in something all over, in such dead earnest that you are ready to give your life for it; just as you business men believe in a thing so that you are ready to risk a fortune on it. Faith is not merely saying, yes, when somebody announces a proposition. It is a belief that drags a whole train of character and consequences after it. That is Paul's belief in justification by faith.

How broad that was, and what power of freedom it had in it, was proved again in the sixteenth century. The Christian Church, under the Catholic power, had become nothing more nor less than a worse Judaism, with ritual and ceremonial,—everything except character, manliness, and force,—when Luther rose; and the weapon with which he broke the chains of modern Europe was Paul's old grand doctrine. I am not sure that we are done with that weapon yet. It does not belong by any patent right to Orthodoxy. Paul forged the weapon. Paul tried its temper and proved its power. Then, it lay rusting and waiting for a thousand years, until Luther proved strong enough to wield it, and once more to fight again the battle for human freedom. And, though it be put away in its armory, it will be called for again and again. For this doctrine means simply going right deep down to the heart of humanity, and saying that

---


what you believe with your whole heart, and are willing to put your life into, is that which makes you what you are.

This, then, is the service which Paul rendered to the world ; and it is hints of this service which are scattered all through these Epistles, and which will make them in all coming time, whatever theory of the Bible may go up or down, of inestimable value to those who care to know the history of humanity.

## THE GOSPELS.

---

As we open the New Testament, we find the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, leading the list of its books. Yet, as I had occasion to tell you in my sermon on the Epistles, if we follow, as I have tried to do in a rough fashion, the chronological order, we shall place the Gospels at the end of the New Testament rather than at the beginning. It was perfectly natural and indeed inevitable, as I have already showed you, that the Gospels should have been written after the Epistles were. It could hardly have been otherwise in the state of Christian belief that existed then; for it was a part of that early belief taught, as they supposed, not only by apostle and teacher, but by the Master himself, that Jesus was very soon to return from sitting at the right hand of God in the heavens, that he was to raise the dead, that there was to be a general judgment and a miraculous ushering in of the world-wide Messianic kingdom. Of course, then, expecting him, perhaps to-night, possibly to-morrow, next week,—at the utmost, very soon,—they would feel no necessity of writing down long stories of his life or connected statements of what he had said. It was only after they had waited and were disappointed; after they had expected, and he had not come; after they had begun to look over the promises of his coming, and see if, in any way, they could explain the delay,—it was only after all this that there arose on the part of those little scattered Christian



communities in the Roman Empire a feeling of the necessity for some connected and authoritative record of what the waited-for Jesus had said and done. Then, of course, it was very natural that those who had opportunity to know these things should write more or less full and connected accounts of them, and that thus the Gospels should spring up.

These four Gospels, four little thin pamphlets,—for they could all be comprehended within the limits of less than a hundred pages,—are really the most significant part perhaps of all the world's literature. They tell, or claim to tell, the story of the life of that Galilean peasant who, after spending his youth in utter obscurity, flashes into the sight of his countrymen for a year, or two, or three, according as we take one account or another, then disappears by an ignominious death, and, after two or three hundred years, is exalted, in the reverence of the civilized world, to the position of Almighty God. No rational man, then, can be indifferent to the nature and authority of these little books, when they tell us a story which has played a part in the history of the civilized world so stupendous, so unique, that it stands alone, and has no second.

What, then, is it that we desire to know concerning them? We want to know of course, first, by what authority these little pamphlets speak. Are they the word of God, infallibly, eternally true? Or are they the traditions of men, stories naturally springing up and growing through the imaginative and creative consciousness of the early Church? Who wrote them? Did Matthew and Mark and Luke and John write them, just as we have them to-day? If they did, who were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and how much are their opinions worth?

Whichever way we look at these Gospels, you see we come back to the question of the authority of these books,

the power by which they speak. It is in pursuit of this that I ask you to come with me this morning, while I examine this subject. I trust you will appreciate the difficulty and magnitude of my task. It is nothing more nor less than to condense into some comprehensible shape whole libraries, and, if I may, pack them, so that my story shall have some significance and meaning, within the abbreviated limits of an hour.

Let us then start from the stand-point of our modern world, and go up the ages, and see what we can find out about these books.

The oldest manuscript that we have of them takes us back only to the fourth century,—that is, some three hundred years after the death of him concerning whom they were written. The first question we naturally ask is, whether there is reason to suppose that we have these four little books in substantially the same shape in which they were originally written. Three hundred years had passed since the death of him of whom they are a biography; and we do not know just when they came into the precise shape in which they are to-day. The names now attached to them we do not find until nearly the last quarter of the second century,—that is, perhaps one hundred and fifty years after the death of Jesus, although the earliest forms of the Gospels may have existed long before that.

The first question, then, as I have said, is whether we have an accurate transcript of these four little books in substantially the same shape in which they were when they first took form. We are obliged to answer this question in the negative; for the different manuscripts of the Gospels which are in existence give us some hundreds, if not thousands, of various renderings. There are differences in words or in phrases, a difference of half a sentence, some-

times differences of whole paragraphs, or sometimes half a chapter, or even more than that. Then, we know that there were changes through the carelessness of transcribers. There were changes from dogmatic reasons, in order that the person copying or using them might make them teach what they held to be true. In this way, changes of greater or less magnitude were made. Sometimes, they were the result of intentional fraud. Let me give you the authority of Origen, one of the most famous and learned of all the church Fathers. It was some time after the New Testament books were written before they took on the character of sacred writings, when a man would not have been regarded as sacrilegious for taking from or adding to them. They were considered as the work of ordinary men, and not too sacred to be touched or changed as yet. But, whatever may have been thought of the books of the New Testament in the early Church, the entire Church at the time professed to regard with almost superstitious sacredness the books of the Old Testament. That was the Scripture before the New Testament became Scripture. Yet we have the authority of Origen, writing in the fourth century, for the statement that, in the heated and angry controversies of that period, people did not scruple to change even the text of the Old Testament for their own purposes. Concerning the Septuagint, he says: "There are evidently great discrepancies in the copies of the Septuagint, whether attributable to the carelessness of scribes, or to the rash and pernicious alteration of the text by some, and the unauthorized interpolations and omissions of others." Origen writes in that way about the manner in which the early Church dared to treat even the Old Testament Scriptures; so you can imagine with what freedom they would handle the less sacred and newer books that afterwards came to be the New Testament.

We know, then, that there were great changes made. These books floated around in the churches, and passed through some of the most biting, bitter, and burning controversies that the religious world has ever seen. They hurled texts on both sides with as much vigor as has been done in the modern world. When you remember that there were only manuscripts, that there were no printed books, no standards of authority or appeal, you can see how easy it might be for a man to make a change in his own copy, and then claim that that was the original. Another man having a copy that did not agree with it would claim that his was the original, and the one who claimed the loudest would be likely to carry the day.

Another point. Were there more than four Gospels, and, if so, how does it happen that we have only four to-day?

There were a great many Gospels written in the early Church. I have here in my hand, for example, a copy of the apocryphal New Testament. It is almost as large as the genuine one. This book is made up of Gospels, visions, and allegories, which were rejected by the orthodox of the Church as time went on. It contains at the beginning four Gospels, the Gospel of Mary, the Protevangelion, the Gospel of the Infancy, the Gospel of Nicodemus. I also hold in my hand the book of an eminent High Churchman of England, entitled *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, which gives an account of ten which were known to the early Church, a part on one side of the great controversy, and a part on the other. I had occasion, in a previous sermon, as you will remember, to refer to the great controversy in the early Church between Paul, who was in favor of admitting the Gentiles, and the other section, headed by Peter and James, who believed that no Gentiles should come in, or only by practically becoming Jews. This controversy raged

for a long period of years ; and we find, as a record of it, certain Gospels called the Petrine Gospels, representing the Hebraic side, and another set called the Pauline Gospels, which take Paul's side of the controversy. They went to the extent of changing the records of the Gospels themselves, coloring them to suit one faction or another of this great party controversy. These Gospels, many of them, were written or changed, as it was supposed, in the interest of heretical sects, though it is quite a question whether those that came to be called heretical were not originally the orthodox ones who changed to heretics by being left behind ; for Orthodoxy changed, as it has been changing ever since, and that which represented the older ideas became the heresies left behind.


Along toward the latter part of the second century, we find that the sifting process has gone on, and the Church has come to a general consensus of opinion as to which Gospels should be accepted as genuine ; and those were the four that we have in our hands to-day.

We can reconstruct some of those lost and hostile Gospels ; that is, we can tell almost the whole story of the life of Jesus as told there, through picking up the quotations made here and there in the controversial writings of the day. Take, for example, the Gospel of Marcion, one of the leading heretics of the time. He had a Gospel which he claimed to be older than any we possess, and which I am inclined to think was so. This represented Jesus as human, and took the Hebraic side of the controversy. Marcion, being one of the great leaders of heresy, was quoted by all the principal writers of the time. They quoted his Gospel here and there and everywhere to such an extent that we can, in the literature of the early Church, pick out nearly the whole of it, and put it together like a piece of mosaic work. As

letting you into the secret of the state of mind of one of those early Fathers that we are accustomed to look upon with such exaggerated reverence, let me give a specimen of his opinions. After the Gospel of John had been written and become popular, and the four Gospels had been decided on, Irenæus, writing about 185 A.D., gives his reason why, in his opinion, there are these four Gospels and no more ; and it is a most astonishing reason. He does not say there are four Gospels because there were only four writers who told the truth, because there were only four who wrote with authority, that there were only four who were inspired to do this kind of work. He does not say anything about that. What does he say? "It is impossible that the Gospels can be more or less than they are. For, as there are four zones in the world which we inhabit, and four principal winds, while the Church is spread abroad throughout the earth, and the pillar and basis of the Church is the gospel and the spirit of life, it is right that she should have four pillars, exhaling immortality on every side, and bestowing renewed vitality on men. From which fact, it follows that the Word has given us four versions of the gospel united by one spirit."

I want you now to consider with me a little the traces of growth which have taken place in these four Gospels. If you look at them carefully, you will have to divide them into two parts ; the first part containing the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the second part John, by itself. The first three have been called the Synoptic Gospels, from two Greek words meaning taking a common view, or seeing together. They give in general the same view of Jesus, different from that of John.

Look at the first three, and you will see some of the evidences lying on the surface which prove to us that we do not have the record as it could have been written in the time or



near the time of Jesus. Of course, I shall not be able to go into very minute points of criticism. I shall only give you specimens of what might be multiplied indefinitely.


Take the genealogies first. Matthew has a genealogy, and Luke has one; yet they both tell the story of the miraculous conception. They both tell us that Jesus was the son of Mary without any human father. Yet they take the pains to give us at length the genealogy of Joseph, as though that had anything to do with it. Unless Jesus was the son of Joseph, giving his genealogy does not prove that he was the son of David or of Abraham, any more than it proves that I am. Of course, it has nothing whatever to do with it. Take one or two other little hints akin to this. Jesus is represented when a mere boy as betraying remarkable precocity in the journey made to Jerusalem. Yet we find his mother, who ought to have known whether he was the son of the Holy Spirit, utterly astonished at this evidence of precocity. We find his brothers charging him with being possessed with the devil, and having no sort of faith in him. We find his townsmen laughing at him, ridiculing his pretensions. Could it be possible that they had had the slightest hint that this was the son of the Most High God,—not only that, but very God himself? If so, ought they to have been very much astonished at any proof of wisdom he might display in his early childhood or in any part of his career? Ought his mother to have been astonished that he should feel that he had a career before him, and that he did not ask parental guidance or permission concerning it?

Another point. We find in the Gospels as we have them now a phrase in which Jesus is represented as giving his disciples the following command: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Turn to Paul's

**Epistles.** We find him talked about, charged with baptizing disciples into his own name. Would it have been possible for him or for any of the disciples to have baptized in the name of Paul, when they had been commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? We know perfectly well from the development of doctrine that, until the second or third centuries, the doctrine of the Trinity was not held at all. So that the fact that this phrase is lying there on the surface of the gospel proves beyond question that it belongs to a later age, and must have been placed there after the doctrine that it represents had grown into the consciousness and belief of the early Church.

Take another point. Jesus is represented, the very last thing before he left the earth, as commanding his disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"; yet he has not been dead ten years before the Church is rent into factions wrangling over the question whether they shall allow any Gentile to hear preaching or not, whether they shall admit a Gentile, even if he wants to come. Is it possible that Jesus could have uttered those words, and all the apostles have forgotten them so quickly? Think what a weapon they would have been to Paul! What if he could have said to Peter and James, Do you not remember that the very last thing the Master said before leaving the earth was that we were to preach the gospel to every creature! But neither Paul refers to it in controversy, nor does James or Peter. The inference is irresistible that the words were placed there in a later age, after the Pauline faction had won the day; and, then, Jesus is represented as indorsing that which was an accomplished fact.

In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus is represented as telling how to deal with those who should become hereti-




cal or offenders in the Church. There was not any church in existence until long after he died. It was absurd to suppose he was talking about church regulations before the Church existed. Then, the spirit of the directions is utterly foreign to the Master. He was always exceedingly tender to publicans and sinners and outcasts. But, here, Jesus is made to say of such an offending disciple: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Can you conceive those words in the mouth of the tender, forgiving, human Son of Man?

Take one more point. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus is represented as sitting on the throne of judgment, and before him are gathered all the nations of the earth; and he is giving, as Almighty God, the conditions of eternal salvation. What are they? Simply, moral goodness,—healing the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, looking after the lowest outcast. These are the conditions. If there were any other conditions, can you conceive him who had come on purpose to save men as forgetting all about them? What is to become then of all that shall die between the time he utters those words and the time that Almighty God shall correct his statement, and give a true version of the conditions of eternal life? Yet, in the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we find the same Jesus represented as sending his disciples into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. And what are the conditions of salvation that are here given? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Not a word about goodness or morality. Instead of its being the Son of Man who utters these last words, I am compelled to imagine in his place a robed and self-sufficient bishop of the Church,

domineering and dictatorial toward those who dared to question his words.

These three Gospels represent three traditions in part; and, in part, they represent one common tradition concerning the life and teaching of Jesus. I want to hint a word about that which would take me a long time to develop with fulness and clearness, so that you may see by what process we get back through the maze of the improbable and the miraculous, until we find ourselves in the presence of the simple Son of Man.

Each writer gives the story of his life. You will find it not only a common story, but the same words, the same phrases are perpetually recurring in each of these three different Gospels. It is settled beyond question, I think, as a principle of criticism that these three writers used some common materials; that is, Mark did not borrow from Matthew, nor Luke from either, but all three used a common fund of tradition. We find traces in the traditions of the times of *logia*, little fragmentary writings. Some one had gathered the sayings of Jesus, another had written a partial account of what he did, and so there grew up this common fund of tradition concerning him. And, when these Gospels were written, they used this common story, making such additions as they thought best. If we take out that which is common to them all, if we take out the story in which they all agree, and leave out that which is added, we come to that to which scholars have given the name of the triple tradition. Suppose we take three Lives of Lincoln or Washington, distinct in many points, and yet agreeing in many, we should feel more certain of those things which were told by all three than of what was told by any one alone. Precisely the same is true here. If we extract the story from these three Gospels, we can make out a complete



history of Jesus of Nazareth, and use only the very words which are common to all three of these different writers.

If we make such a story as that, what kind of a man do we find? The supernatural birth is lost at once, so also the story of the supernatural resurrection and ascension into heaven. Nearly all the more stupendous and incredible miracles are gone; and we stand in the presence of a simple, loving, tender, heroic, devoted man,—a man about whom wonder stories are beginning to gather, and they seem so simple and so natural that we can almost see the materials out of which they have sprung. This is the process that criticism is going through with to-day, just as it seeks to find the origin of any wonderful story that it believes to have had an historic basis.


I have said John stands apart. The other three Gospels were growths. Neither Matthew nor Mark nor Luke wrote them. Those names as attached to them were purely traditional, but without one particle of authority. We do not find those names until nearly two hundred years have gone by.

It is a fact recognized by all the best orthodox criticism of to-day, as represented by Prof. Robertson Smith in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and by Dr. Abbott of the English Church in the same, that these Gospels are unapostolic digests of early traditions. That is, some one has edited and gathered into the shape in which we have them materials a good deal older than they. The Gospel of John, however, stands alone. Here, Jesus is not a simple man. It is announced in the very outset that it is not a simple man of whom he writes. John's Gospel is a theological treatise. He starts out with a thesis which he is going to prove, and he selects from the materials here and there that which shall serve his purpose; and, when he is done, we recognize hardly a single lineament of the simple son of Joseph and Mary of the first

three Gospels, and we find in his place a grand, pre-existent, spiritual, metaphysical abstraction ; for the Jesus of John is not a man. He could by no possibility have been the same person about whom Matthew, Mark, and Luke are writing. By the time John wrote, the doctrine had developed of his being the pre-existent Christ, partaking of the nature of God. He says nothing about any human origin or birth, but begins with him in the heavens, before he descends to earth. Then, after a brief phenomenal appearance here, he disappears into the clouds again.

Let us note two or three points of difference between this conception and the others. According to the first three Gospels, the public life of Jesus is given as about a year and a half ; and he makes one journey to Jerusalem, spending most of his life in Galilee.

John, on the other hand, appears to give his public life as continuing three years. He makes three journeys to Jerusalem, and spends the greater part of his life in Judea. Both cannot be true. See how different are the whole circumstances, the whole atmosphere, and the kind of man. The writer of John evidently lived out of Judea. He lived after the destruction of Jerusalem. He makes all kinds of mistakes in geography. He does not locate the towns correctly, nor under the right names. John was intensely Jewish in belief and sympathy, and yet the writer of this Gospel speaks of the Jews as though they were a foreign people. He even speaks to the Jews of things in their law as what is written "in your law." Suppose I, a citizen of Massachusetts, should stand here and talk about one of the common statutes under which we all live as of "your law." If I came from Ohio, it would be appropriate enough ; but, if I lived in Massachusetts, it would be absurd. Or, as if I were writing a book, and should speak about Americans as though I were an Eng-



lishman or a Frenchman. John is speaking all the time of what the Jews did and said, reflecting the time when the Christians began to look on the Jews as natural enemies, and the persons who had crucified their Lord. Let me read a sentence here from Dr. Martineau, one of the leading Unitarians of the world:—

That a constant companion of the ministry of Jesus should shift it almost wholly to a new theatre, should never come across a demoniac, and never tell a parable; should remember nothing about the Kingdom of Heaven and the Coming of the Son of Man; should have forgotten the last Passover of the little flock, with its institution of the Communion, and have occupied those festival hours with the Crucifixion instead; should have lost the Master's terse maxims and sweet images of life, thrown out in homely dialogue, and have fancied in their place elaborate monologues, darkened with harsh and mystic paradox,—is so utterly against nature as to forfeit the rank of an admissible hypothesis.


That is, Dr. Martineau thinks it absurd that John could have been the author of this Gospel. Jesus does not utter any parables in this Gospel. He tells them not to make long prayers, and yet he prays through a whole chapter. He who was tender and loving toward the past, and who counted himself as a prophet like those of old, and who accepted his mission as prophesied and foretold, is made to say that all who came before him were thieves and robbers. The Jesus of John's Gospel is metaphysical, unlovable, hardly human, utterly unlike the simple man of Nazareth of the first three.

Now, I must tell you how it came that such a Gospel as this should have been written, and under what bias it was composed.

I have referred before to the philosophy and the sect of the Gnostics. They grew up in this way. When the Septuagint translation of the Bible was made, there started up in Alexandria a great school of philosophy, the avowed purpose of which, in part, was to reconcile the religion of the

Jews and the philosophy of Greece ; and, from that day on, this mixture of Old Testament religion and Grecian philosophy went on, fermenting and changing according to the popular taste and speculations of the time, until, along in the second and third centuries, we find ourselves face to face with this great system of Gnosticism. What was the central point of their belief? They believed that matter was essentially evil and the source of evil ; that God was the ineffable, the infinite, the unseen, who dwelt remote from all possible contact with the visible world. Yet, in some way, he was the source of all life and all things. They had, therefore, to bridge over this almost infinite gulf between God and the world by conceiving or speculating on what they called *æons*, or emanations.

That is, in some inexplicable, mysterious way, a god a little lower than the Infinite One emanates from him, constituting a god of the second class, and then from this god of the second class emanates a third, and so on till, to make up the complete chain, there are about thirty different *æons* or emanations. The last and lowest of the whole range was the one who created the world. They identified him with the Jehovah of the Old Testament. When they began to speculate about the nature of Jesus, they conceived that, in some marvellous, mysterious way, he summed up all this chain of *æons*, or emanations, so that it is said that in him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily. You find in him the whole *pleroma*, the technical term by which they designated this whole range of *æons* that linked the Infinite God to the world. It was a wild region of speculation. They did not have one single fact to go on, and it did not seem to occur to any one of them that they needed a fact. It was one wild chaos of speculation, in which the simplest and mildest virtues became endowed with personality.



The opening of John's Gospel seems very simple in English,—all this about life and light and truth. But, when we look at it carefully, we find that these were sub-gods, deities, spelled with a capital letter, personified ; and Jesus sums them all up in himself, and becomes the link to bind God and the world together. Under the influences of this philosophy, John's Gospel was written. It was a reconciling book between the divisions in the Church, between the Gnostics and the other believers. When one who understands Gnosticism looks at it, he sees it all covered with the finger-marks of that system, as modern literature is covered over with the finger-marks of evolution or Darwinism. It could not have been written till Gnosticism was in the air, any more than Darwinism could exist till Darwin had lived.


In what position do we stand concerning the life and words of Jesus? Have we a record of them that is perfect, complete, authoritative?

No, we must confess that we have not, so far, as we can be certain, the testimony of a single eye-witness of anything he ever did. Paul is our oldest witness, and he never saw Jesus. We have not the authoritative record of a word he ever uttered. Yet do not misunderstand me, or think I go too far. I do not doubt in the least that we have substantially a true account of the sayings of Jesus. There are a good many things recorded that I believe he did not say, and of course he said a thousand things which are not there. But the words of Jesus were of such a nature that they were not easily to be forgotten. We may safely trust them to tradition, and expect them to be reported with a great deal of accuracy ; and we may believe that we have them substantially as he uttered them.

As we slough off the accretions and later growths of miracle and marvel, what kind of a man do we see Jesus

must have been? Simply, a tender, gentle, true, God-conscious man, sympathetic toward all men, a hero, a martyr, a man who shared the doubts and errors of his age,—which is only saying that he was human,—and yet rising above it like the Andes above a plain. He was grand in his heroism, simple and true when standing for his convictions in the face of the Roman governor and the howling mob; thoughtful and tender to the last, yet going unflinchingly to feel the nails driven through the quivering flesh that fastened him to the cross; a man, combining manhood's strongest strength and womanhood's tenderest grace; a man to be loved, to be honored, to be everything except worshipped. A man whose name we may be proud to wear, if we do not change it until it has a meaning that he would not have recognized.

When we come to speak of the miracles, there is no intelligent jury in Boston could ever be induced to commit a man to prison for thirty days for the crime of larceny, unless they had stronger evidence for it than we have of any New Testament miracle. We have stronger evidence for miracles performed in the time of Saint Augustine, in the time of Thomas à Becket, for those in Lourdes last year, than we have of the New Testament miracles. Yet we let them pass by us as the idle winds which we make no account of. Shall we then believe these because they are old, because they are anonymous, because we cannot put the witnesses on the stand and cross-question them, because we do not know who they were or when or where they lived. But, even if we had proof of such things, what then? It seems strange to me that people should make so much of the question whether John wrote the Gospel bearing his name or not. If he did, it is purely a literary question. If I knew that John, who leaned on the bosom of Jesus, wrote the Gospel, and therein declared that he was a supernatural being, why



should I believe it? Suppose that Mr. Herndon, after an intimate association of years with Lincoln, should tell me that it was his private conviction that Abraham Lincoln was a supernatural being: should I believe it? It would be only his opinion, and we must have something more than a simple opinion of any man before we can accept the stupendous statement that three in heaven are different from three on earth, and that a fallible, weak, suffering, dying man is at the same moment the eternal and infinite God of all the worlds.


But, after these are all gone by, we have in this New Testament the record of a life whose influences cannot die,—one which, so far as it has had opportunity to make its own simple way and tell its own simple story, has been largely sweetening, brightening, helpful, uplifting,—and divine.

## THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE.

---

It is generally assumed that there is such a thing as "The Religion of the Bible." And, further, it is also generally assumed that this religion is one, simple, and easily discovered. Men speak of "the Word," as though indeed the Bible were only one word, and had but one utterance. One man says, "I am a Bible Christian," as though that were a perfectly definite thing that any one could easily deduce from a plain reading of the book. "The Bible is the religion of Protestants," said Chillingworth, thinking that thus he was plainly setting forth the grounds of the Reformation as against the pretensions of Rome. "Go and read your Bible prayerfully, and you will find it a sure and safe guide,"—so from our childhood have we heard our ministers telling us.

All this takes for granted that the Bible contains and clearly sets forth some one, definite system of religious truth, to the exclusion of all other systems. But what are the facts, as practically set forth in the real condition of the "Christian" world? The Romanist prayerfully reads his Bible, and he finds in it the primacy of Peter, the supremacy of the Church, and the direction to "do penance" for the forgiveness of sins. The Protestant prayerfully reads it, and he discovers that Rome is the "mystic Babylon," the "mother of harlots," the "abomination of desolation." The Churchman reads it prayerfully, and he sees priestly supremacy and sacramental salvation. The Congregationalist reads



it prayerfully, and comes away convinced that sacramentalism is the deadly "works of the law" that are forbidden, and that every believer is his own all-sufficient priest. The Baptist looks into it, and sees all true believers going clean under the water ; while most other sects see them only going down to the edge of the water and standing there to be sprinkled. Cromwell and his Roundheads read it, and saw everywhere "the Lord of Hosts" leading on his followers to battle; and they went out shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" The Quaker reads it, and finds everywhere "the Prince of Peace," hears only the command, "Resist not evil," and repeats after his Master, "He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." The Unitarian reads it, and comes away flourishing the text, "My Father is greater than I"; and he remembers that Jesus was sometimes ignorant, was weary and hungry, and seemed in all points a man. The Trinitarian goes into the same armory, and comes out wielding the phrase, "I and my Father are one." The Orthodox sees overshadowing all the pages the dreadful image of justice and wrath, says, "Our God is a consuming fire," and sees this fiery wrath flaming against his enemies even to the lowest hell. The Universalist sees only the loving "heavenly Father," and turns the most awful forebodings into Oriental tropes and pictorial rhetoric. The Mormon picks out phrases to bolster up his polygamy; the monogamist falls back on Adam and Eve, and cries out even against divorce; while the Shaker, on the basis of the personal example and specific words of Jesus, forbids all sexual relations whatever. The Northerner loaded his gun with texts, and went out to fight for freedom; while the Southerner quoted Noah's curse against Ham, and the patriarchal example, and so met Bible with Bible in defence of slavery.

What, then, is this strange book? The gypsy fortune-

teller sometimes invites her maiden inquirer to look into her magic mirror, and assures her that she shall see the face of her future husband. She looks and sees her own; and, for explanation, she gets the intelligence that, when married, her face will be her husband's. Is the Bible a magic mirror, in which every comer sees his own face reflected? All these sects—mutually exclusive, contradictory, antagonistic—appeal with equal confidence to the same book as the charter of their rights and the ground of their authority. Each one is sure that it is right, and equally sure that all the others are wrong. And, until recent times, there has been a short and easy way of accounting for all dissentient opinion. Each sect has said, "All good and honest people see it as I do. A different opinion means wilful blindness and a bad heart." And, since they have all held it the plain duty of "the Lord's people" to destroy his enemies, and since each one has held it self-evident that its enemies and the Lord's enemies were the same, the dominant sect has generally thought best to give its opponents a foretaste in this world of the Lord's "uncovenanted mercies" stored up in the nether regions of the next.

But thoughtful people are beginning to wonder if it can be possible that a book that is read in so many different ways can teach one and only one system of truth. They are beginning to wonder if it can be a plain revelation that reveals so many different things. Of course, if one is at liberty to pick and choose, to wink hard when you come to the hard places, to twist texts by private interpretation until you get a meaning out of them that their writer never thought of, to adopt Swedenborg's method, and make passages mean almost anything except what they say,—why, then, of course, one can get any teaching he pleases out of anything. The spelling-book or the dictionary might serve

for a Bible, if it can be treated in that way. In one of his humorous letters during the war, Nasby said that the text, "Cursed be Canaan," and Paul's directions about returning the fugitive slave, Onesimus, were to be taken literally: "all the rest of the Bible is figurative." If one may treat as "figurative" whatever he does not happen to like or want to believe, why then, all of us can believe the Bible, and get out of it anything we please. But, I take it, we will all agree that, intellectually, this is hardly respectable, and that, morally, it is not quite honest.

Turning then and looking at the Bible with wide-open, reasonable eyes, what do we find it to be? It contains snatches of rude song and fragments of custom-made law that are perhaps two thousand years older than Christ; and it is not completed for two hundred years after his time. Tradition, history, law, theology, ethics, proverb, idyl, poetry, letters, authentic, anonymous, pseudonymous, all mingled together! It is not a book: it is a national literature. Suppose I should make a compilation. Let me gather the fragments of far-off Saxon sagas and legal maxims; put in a little of the Venerable Bede, of Beowulf, of Chaucer; include some of Froissart's Chronicles and a play of Shakspeare; make a collection of English and American law, history, and poetry; let me bind them all together in one volume; then let me try to gather out of it all one simple system of belief, in which all the variety and contradiction should harmonize,—what would you think of such an attempt? I can imagine you admiring my ingenuity, but it would certainly be at the expense of my judgment. Very like this is the effort of those who try to get out of the Bible one consistent system of religious teaching. The Bible, as I have said, is not a book, but a national literature. It is the biography of a race. It is predominantly a relig-

ious literature, for the simple reason that the national genius was predominantly religious. Their God was also king; and so law and custom, politics and poetry, were all looked at from the theocratic stand-point.

But this peculiar feature of the Biblical literature brings out in strong relief two very important facts, that we need carefully to note before we go on in our search.

1. It shows us that religion is natural, a part of the nature of things,—something not put on like a garment, and that thus can be as easily thrown off. It is a part of human nature, and so as permanent as human nature itself. Those who seek for it a supernatural origin and ground render it a very doubtful homage and service. For if it is not an inherent part of human nature, but something thrust into the system from without, then human nature may some day decide to thrust it off, and get on without it. But, in reality, it is man's eternal search for the secret of life, his endeavor to get into right relation with the nature of things.

2. The other fact is this: since it is a part of human nature, we should expect to find its form growing and changing, just as the external manifestations of all the other elements of human nature grow and change. So, instead of being troubled by the early crudenesses and the kaleidoscopic changes in theology, these things are just what we ought to expect.

There is, then, in the ordinary sense of the words, no such thing as "the Religion of the Bible." Instead of that, there are the religions of the Bible. Or, if you prefer another way of putting it, there is the eternal search for God, taking on ever new and higher forms and phases, to keep step with the growing intelligence and civilization of man.

Not as exhausting, but only indicating the facts, let us now

trace some of the more important features of some of the different religions of the Bible.

1. As, then, we turn to the oldest traditions of the religion of Israel, not only do we find no Christianity, which so many claim to be the religion of the Bible, but we find no Judaism; neither do we find even the tribal worship of Yahveh. We are face to face with pure and simple *nature worship* in its crudest forms. We find the traces of fetichism all around us, such a fetichism as to-day goes along with and indicates the lower barbarism of tribes like the Fijis or those of Central Africa.

For example, we find the worship of sacred trees, sacred stones, sacred serpents, sacred animals, a sacred box or ark, divination like that of the old augurs, sex-worship, the worship of the planets, and an attempt to appease the ferocious god by human sacrifices. It is quite true that the later writers attempted to interpret all these things in the light of their later monotheism, just as the Catholic Church incorporated the older paganism, and tried to make it a part of Christianity. But that does not change the facts. The common people worshipped the sacred oaks at Mamre, though later times tried to explain this popular reverence by associating them with a supposed camping station of Abraham. Jacob pays reverence to a stone where he has a wondrous dream. Moses lifts up a brazen serpent, supposed to possess magical curative virtues. At the exodus, and even as late as after the death of Solomon, Yahveh is worshipped under the image of a bull. And the Temple itself perpetuated the remnants of the old bull-worship by the horns attached to the altar, and the twelve brazen oxen which stood under and held up the laver used for the sacred lustrations. The Israelite armies supposed they carried their god around in a box or ark. The

Philistines could capture him, and leave them defenceless without his aid. Rachel steals the gods of her father Laban, hides them under the camel furnishings in her tent, and sits upon them. Divination, like that of all the pagan nations, was practised by patriarchs, by Samuel, by David, by the High Priests, and even by New Testament apostles. Sex-worship—the *Ashera*, translated “grove” in the Old Testament, was a symbol of it—was practised with all kinds of abominable rites. The festival of the new moon, and the Sabbath itself, show the general hold of planet-worship on the life of the people. And Abraham, Jephthah, Samuel, David, and many of the later kings, illustrate the early practice and the very late hold on the public mind of human sacrifice.

These things are not strange. Since all races have passed through these crude and brutal stages of religious development, we ought not to wonder that Israel does the same. Only these facts are not quite consistent with a special revelation, or with the notion that the Bible contains but one religion.

2. After nature worship there comes a general popular recognition of *allegiance to one god*.

This does not mean that they always worshipped only him, nor that they disbelieved the existence of any others. It only means that they had adopted him as their tribal god. That they continued to worship others is apparent all the way through the Old Testament. The prophets are always rebuking them for it, and their calamities are always being attributed to it. Though, on this theory, it is a little strange that an idolatrous king like Manasseh has a long and prosperous reign, while the faithful servant of Yahveh, like Josiah, is cut off in disastrous defeat.

As long as they believed in the real existence and power of other gods, it is hardly strange that they should try to win their favor. Mr. Conway tells us of a Christian woman in England who always bows when the devil's name is mentioned; prudently arguing that, if he really exists and is as powerful as he is represented, it may be just as well to keep on the right side of him.

Some of the very texts that are frequently quoted to prove a monotheistic belief on the part of the Jews, in reality prove just the opposite. Yahveh is "King of kings and Lord of lords," a "great King above all gods." The lords and gods over whom he is supreme must exist, or such words mean nothing.

And it is absurd, also, to try to think that the god of Samuel and David is the same being as the god of the second Isaiah and of Jesus. The older conception is of a being who comes down on earth, as Jupiter and Mercury used to do, and walks about, talks, and eats like a man. He is jealous; he is ignorant, having to go down to Babel and Sodom to see what is going on; he makes mistakes and repents; he likes the smell of a burning ox offered in sacrifice; he rejoices over the destruction of an enemy like a red-handed tribal war-chief.

3. But, as ages go by, and the people rise to a higher type of civilization, the popular god is transformed, and reflects this higher type of civilization. We are face to face with a *spiritual monotheism*. To the higher prophets, only one god really exists: "All the gods of the nations are idols." They have ears, eyes, hands, and feet; but they neither hear, see, handle, nor walk. And this higher god cares nothing for their sacrifices nor the smell of their burnt offerings. He only wants truth in the inward parts and righteousness of life. How different he from

the old god who himself inspired prophets to lie, glorified treachery, sanctioned rape, and took delight in the blood of his enemies! The highest peak of the Old Testament is reached when Micah proclaims, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Here is a religion of simple moral monotheism,—one god only, and he to be worshipped only by lofty-souled reverence and human goodness.

4. But Israel does not remain on this lofty table-land of noble thought and pure devotion. From this time on to the birth of Jesus there is a declension toward the lower level of *legalism, ritual, and ceremony*. The free inspiration of the prophets has died out, and they begin to look back and live on the past. Instead of being themselves inspired, they worship the records of a past inspiration. Sacrifices and tithes and petty observances take the place of character and noble deeds. They quarrel over such questions as to how often and in what ways they shall wash their hands. They measure off the precise distance which it is permitted one to walk on the Sabbath. They wear charms about their persons, made up of magical texts of Scripture. They buy supposed merit at the expense of long and tedious prayers. They hamper every hour of the day with some petty observance, to break over which they think will incur the anger of their god.

But what a god he must be to care for such humdrum boy's play as all this! This is the second childhood of a religion, the decrepitude of an age that can only sit by the fireside, and tell over what it has done.

And, in all these forms of the older religions, one important fact is to be specially remarked. Those who talk about "the religion of the Bible" are accustomed to tell us that

the one object of it all is to save our souls in the next world. But, throughout these four forms of religion to be so clearly traced in the Old Testament, soul-saving in the next world has played no part at all. Until the very last there was no popular belief in or teaching about any next world at all. Until within two thousand years, then, this same God (as the popular faith teaches), who is now so anxious to have us save our souls, never told the world, never told his chosen people, that they had any souls, or that there was any next world! When these old Jews come up to judgment and ask God why he did not let them know about it, what will he answer? Is it not even absurd for men who claim to be intelligent to tell us that two religions, the sole object of one of which is to save people in the other world, and the other of which does not teach any other world at all, are still one and the same? Jewish rewards and punishments, down almost to the time of Christ, were all confined to this world.

5. But now we have come to still another and a *new religion*. Jewish hopes and Persian dreams have wrought together. Pagan speculations and Israelite apocalypses, like the Book of Enoch, have filled the air with vague expectations. The people are looking, either through revolution on earth or an avatar from heaven, for the coming of an ideal kingdom. John appears in the desert, proclaiming that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The young Jesus appears at his baptism, and is designated as the expected Messianic king. He accepts the supposed prophetic appointment. But he carries it out in such a way that even John begins to doubt if he is really the one, and sends messengers from his prison at Machærus to ask him.


What, now, really was the religion of Jesus? In a word, it was this. Through his instrumentality, God was soon to usher in, suddenly and by miracle, a kingdom of heaven. It was

to be established on earth. The terms of admission to its divine citizenship were very simple. Not a word about Trinity or atonement,—only acceptance of him as the Messiah; repentance, or a practical change of life so far as it had been evil; and the practical living out of moral goodness as he understood and taught it. The dark side of it was—if it be really true that Jesus taught it—the going away of those who refused his conditions “into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels.” To Jesus, the devil was as real a being as God; and he undoubtedly accepted the superstition of his time as to the demoniacal origin of disease.

Here, then, is a religion entirely distinct from anything the Old Testament contains, and also almost altogether unlike anything that later ages have called by the name of Christian.

I am aware that large numbers of people attempt to allegorize these facts all away. But it seems to me neither scholarship nor plain dealing to torture the language of Jesus into conformity with modern thought, as long as it is perfectly well known that this same modern thought was unheard of in that age. The language of Jesus is to be interpreted in the light of the beliefs and ideas prevalent at the time he lived and spoke. I am then compelled to believe that, in the historic sense of the word, Jesus himself was not a Christian. He was a theist, pure and simple; or, in the sense that he believed in only one God, a Unitarian.

6. But the New Testament contains the fruitful germs and outlines of another religion still. There is, first, the religion of Jesus; and then, after that, there is a religion about Jesus. Jesus himself did not teach what has come to be called Christianity; but Christianity, formed of many composite elements, grew up around the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and so



made his Messiahship, the *Christos*, its central doctrine. Hence the name. It was the crystallized result of the flowing together of many speculative ingredients, pagan, Jewish, philosophic. It started with the idea of "the kingdom of God," just as Jesus did. At first, it was to be here on earth; then, after long waiting and many disappointments, it was transferred to the other world. But it radically diverged from the teaching of Jesus in regard to the conditions of entrance into that kingdom. The man Jesus was changed into a god; and about this central article of faith there clustered an aggregation of mystic, philosophic, and speculative beliefs, the acceptance of all of which became the condition of salvation. Around these beliefs grew a thorny hedge of ceremonial, as tangled and luxuriant in its development as the world had ever seen. The guardians of these became dominant, and made it so hard to be saved that hell grew populous and heaven exceedingly lonesome.

Then, as ages went by, came revolt, and the multiplication of sects, each one claiming it had the whole gospel. And, as each one emphasized this doctrine or that, the conditions of salvation became multiplied and bewildering. It was faith, it was works, it was ritual and sacrament, it was the blood, it was one thing or another according to the church you attended or the preacher you heard. All pointed to the Bible; and, since all these things are in the Bible, it is not very strange that those who look should find almost anything that they desire.

Dr. George E. Ellis has recently raised the question — and a storm at the same time — as to whether the Bible is orthodox. You might as well ask as to whether *English Literature* is orthodox. It is, and it is not. It all depends upon what part of it you read. If you fix your attention on one

phase of teaching, and if you then consider everything that contradicts that as figurative, why, then, it becomes comparatively easy to harmonize the whole around a few ideas. But, if you take the Bible for what it is,— a national religious literature,— you will cease talking about “the religion of the Bible.” You will trace the upward steps and stages of growth in religion, as well as in all other things ; and, looking forward instead of behind, you will learn to believe that God is really alive to-day, and that his last word is not yet spoken.

## THE MORALITY OF THE BIBLE.

---

I WISH to give expression to just one word of preface before beginning the treatment of my theme, lest the purpose that I have in view, and the method of carrying out that purpose, shall be misunderstood. If we could only take this grand old book for what it really is, for what it really claims to be, how gladly would I spend my time not in criticism, but in eulogy; for it occupies a unique position in the history of our race. On the basis of what it claims to be, there is no grander book in the world. You will understand then that, in what I am about to do this morning, I am not criticising the Bible, I am not finding fault with its ethical teaching; I am only criticising a theory, a conception of the Bible, a teaching about it, which has dominated the world for centuries, and which, as I believe, stands in the way of the world's further and nobler progress.

---

There are two questions that must be asked and answered, in order that we may understand the position which this book holds in regard to the ethical teachings of the world.

In the first place, does the Bible contain one, and only one, system of ethical teaching? Is the teaching in the early part of the book the same as that of the middle and latter part? Are there no signs of progress and growth

such as we find connected with the other religions of the world?

The next question is: Is the highest ethical teaching of the Bible perfect and complete, meeting the wants of the nineteenth century, and capable of satisfying the needs of any possible development of human life and thought in the future? If the Bible contains one system, and only one, and if that one system is perfect and divine, then we should be able to believe, when we take this book in our hands, that we actually held a divine and infallible revelation. But, if there is more than one system, and if one system is higher than another; if there are traces and evidences of growth, and if the highest teaching is not complete and perfect for all time,—why then, of course, we shall not be able to believe that we have an infallible and divine revelation of moral truth. They who deal in apology or defence of the Bible talk to us of a progressive revelation. But a “progressive revelation” is an absurdity, on the theory of a divine and infallible one. If, for example, God gave light and guidance to the Hebrews only so fast and so far as they were intellectually developed enough to appreciate it, so that they received comparatively the same kind of light that other nations received at the same stage or degree of development, then we are reduced to the absurdity of supposing that God reveals truth only as fast as people are capable of finding it out for themselves; which of course is a contradiction in terms. These, then, are the two questions.

Leaving one side, now, for the moment, all thought of a divine revelation of moral truth, looking abroad over the world and tracing the origin and development of ethical principles, we find this one thing everywhere plainly to be observed: In all parts of the world, among nations that have reached substantially the same level of intelligence, the same

grade of civilization, and are in substantially similar circumstances of life, we find substantially the same ethical principles and precepts. That is, people in China, when they had risen to a certain level of intellectual and moral development, held substantially the same ideas of character and conduct that people in Egypt held, when they had reached the same level or a similar one. We find the same natural process of growth at work as in the vegetable world. If you climb up the sides of the Alps, so many feet above the level of the sea, and then climb up the same height above the level of the sea on the sides of the Andes, if you do not find the same vegetable growths, you find corresponding ones, in similar circumstances. This is the method of nature.

If, then, we should find no revelation touching the matter of right and wrong, we should expect to find this principle at work everywhere. Outside of the Bible, we do find this principle at work. We find in similar circumstances, in similar grades of development, and in similar grades of intelligence, similar precepts and principles. If we shall find substantially the same thing true concerning the Bible, then, of course, we must surrender the idea that here is anything supernatural or exceptional. We must place Bible ethics in the same natural category and classification with all the rest that we can discover.

Before discussing Bible ethics, simply as a suggestion, a hint of what may be found in other places, as a sort of background to my thought, I wish to give you two or three specimens of the ethics of ancient Egypt, that you may see what kind of ideas, what sort of conception of God and duty, men were capable of attaining and really did attain three thousand years at least before Christ was born. In the first quotation that I shall make, you will perceive their conception of God. This, of course, while a part of religion, is also a part of

ethics. If you can find out what sort of character men attribute to God, you will find a reflection on the sky of their own moral conceptions of that which is highest and best. Within recent years, a large part of the sacred literature of ancient Egypt has been recovered. On monuments, in papyrus rolls, on tombs, and preserved in many different ways, have been found sayings which date back beyond the popularly supposed period of the occurrence of the flood,—perhaps some of them older than the creation itself, as dated by the popular chronology.

Here are a few of these sayings,—the first addressed to God : —

“Every one glorifies thy goodness. Mild is thy love toward us : thy tenderness surrounds our hearts. Great is thy love in all the souls of men.”

“Let not thy face be turned away from us : the joy of our hearts is to contemplate thee. Chase all anguish from our hearts. He wipes tears from off all faces.”

“Hail to thee, Ra, Lord of all truth ; who listeneth to the poor in his distress ; gentle of heart, when we cry to thee ; deliverer of the timid man from the violent ; judging the poor, the poor and the oppressed ; sovereign of life, health, and strength.”

“The heart of man is no secret to him that made it. He is present with thee, though thou be alone.”

Then here is a fragment from an inscription on a tomb, giving the idea of the writer as to what kind of life he should have lived : —

“I honored my father and my mother. I loved my brothers. I taught little children. I took care of orphans as though they had been my own children.”

There has been recently brought to light, from the ruins of that old civilization, almost a complete work, called the *Maxims of Ptahhotep*, which dates from the age of the



Pyramids, and which even then refers to the authority of ancient times. It is the most ancient book in the world, as far as is known. Rénouf, the great French Egyptian scholar, says that "they inculcate the study of wisdom, the duty to parents and superiors, respect for property, the advantages of charitableness, peaceableness and content, of liberality, humility, chastity, and sobriety, of truthfulness and justice." M. Chabas, who first gave the book to the world, says: "None of the Christian virtues is forgotten in it: piety, charity, gentleness, self-command in word and action, chastity, the protection of the weak, benevolence toward the humble, deference to superiors, respect for property in its minutest details,—all is expressed there, and in extremely clear language."

We cannot resist drawing the inference from this that, if ancient Egypt three thousand years before Christ was capable, without a revelation, of attaining to a knowledge and, in some degree, to a practice of all the finest so-called Christian virtues, it is hardly possible to make out any necessity for a revelation, in order to teach these a thousand or two years later to another people.


Had I time, I would like to place beside these one specimen from the *Mahâbhârata*, the great Indian or Hindu epic. There is one selection which I am obliged to think is finer, higher, more humane than anything which the whole Bible contains. It represents one of seven brothers, the last of the seven, standing at the entrance to the Indian heaven. His six brothers, his wife, and his faithful dog, the constant companions of his life, have fallen by the way; and he stands alone at the gates. The gods come down to welcome him; and there is a throne waiting him, vacant till he shall occupy it. They bid him come in, but he stands there, and asks the gods what is to become of his brothers, his wife,

and his dog ; and, until he is assured that they also shall share his bliss and his glory, he turns his back on the heavens, and refuses to enter. I know of nothing in all religious literature higher, finer, grander than that. Certainly, it compares most favorably with the old Puritan picture of the saints leaning over the battlements of heaven, and enjoying the spectacle and listening to the groans of their brethren in eternal torments below.

I now turn, to treat, as briefly as I can, some suggestions concerning the moral teachings of the Old Testament and the New.

1. First, let us look at the Old Testament, and attempt to answer my first question, whether there is one system of teaching in the Bible, whether the Old Testament teaches the same as the New. Of course, in so brief a review, I must omit many points. I only intend to take up specimens here and there.

One of the first things we come across is the doctrine of revenge, or retaliation. We find in the Old Testament that practice which, in Southern Europe, in tales of love and passion, we are familiar with as the *vendetta*, or the duty of the living relatives of a man who has been murdered, or killed by accident, to pursue and relentlessly revenge the death of the murdered man. We find this taught and indorsed by Yahveh himself, who goes so far as to establish certain cities of refuge where a man might flee, provided he had killed a man by accident, or, as we should say, in case of justifiable homicide. If he were caught before he reached that city, it was justifiable to put him to death, even if he had not intended to commit murder. That is a part of the social morality of the Old Testament. Would we consider that up to the level of the best life of the nineteenth century? The New York *Nation* has been calling very



vigorous and earnest attention to practices similar to this in the South, treating them as evidence of savagery, and calling upon the South to cleanse its skirts from these relics of barbarism before they can expect that civilized people will go there to live, or invest their capital among them. This, then, is instinctively pronouncing judgment on this kind of ethics by the conscience of the modern world.


Turn to another institution which is taught and indorsed and regulated by God himself in the Old Testament, the system of polygamy. If the Bible were to be treated like any other book, I should not have a word to say against polygamy in the Old Testament. There was a time when it was moral. If you trace the upward growth of social life, you will find that man began several grades lower down than polygamy; and polygamy is a step in advance of that which preceded it. It is part way up the ladder from where the human race began toward the position we now occupy. I should have nothing against polygamy as part of the process of the social development of the world. We criticise it to-day only because the world has outgrown it. It was well enough in its time and place; but the world has now higher moral conceptions of social order, and so looks down on that as something belonging to a barbaric past. You know how we look upon the Mormons to-day, what a blot we consider it on the national escutcheon, how we apologize for it and hope to outgrow it and leave it behind, how we are ashamed of it in the face of Europe; and yet it is recognized by God himself, taught, arranged for, ordered by him. We find ourselves, on the orthodox theory, in the curious position of apologizing for God, if that is a part of an infallible and eternal revelation.

Leaving that, we come to slavery. Slavery is recognized in the Old Testament as right. The people are permitted

not only to buy strangers, but their own race, other Jews. There is one slight mitigation, when they are dealing with their own brethren. Although they were permitted to buy and hold a Jew as a slave, after six years he was set free by the limitation of the law concerning him. But, if he were married and had become the father of children, if he chose to go out and take his liberty, he had to leave his wife and family still in slavery,—a diabolically ingenious device for keeping him in slavery himself; for no true man would leave his wife and children, and take his freedom on those terms.

In regard to slavery, I should say precisely as concerning polygamy. If I might treat it from the stand-point of the natural development of the world, it would need no apology in the Old Testament. Slavery itself was once relatively right. It was relatively better than that type of social life which preceded it. It took the place of the indiscriminate slaughter of one's enemies in time of war. It was a definite, distinct step upward in social evolution; and I should not be called to apologize for it, if people did not tell me that it was a part of the divine revelation. If it were, it must be not only good for that age, but for any and every age.

Let us next consider the Old Testament code of morals concerning other nations in time of war. God permits—nay, he commands—wars of absolute extermination. He commands them to put to death men, women, and children, infants in arms, gray-headed age, even to destroy the very cattle and everything which had belonged to the tribe with which they were at war. Merciless massacre is part of the ethics of the Old Testament. Would we consider anything like that as justified for a moment in regard to the relations which nations maintain with each other in the nineteenth century? If there were a respectable people on the face of the earth capable of carrying on war as it is carried on there,




under divine guidance and orders, the civilized world would rush to arms to compel that nation to be humane.

One other point. I have said that the conception which any people hold concerning God is a part of its morality, because the character of the deity is a reflection of the character of the people themselves. What kind of character, then, must we attribute to these old Jews, when we look at the kind of god who reveals himself through a large part of the Old Testament,—a god who is jealous, a god who likes flattery, a god who is cruel, a god who takes delight in the cries of slaughtered victims and in the smell of their blood and the smoke of their burnings, a god who permits and accepts human sacrifices, a god who teaches his own prophets to lie, a god who commands rape, a god guilty of almost every crime. Of course, this does not exhaust the Old Testament teaching concerning God. You will not misunderstand me so crudely as that. There is no finer teaching concerning God than some parts of the Old Testament furnish,—none loftier, none nobler, none more beautiful: only these things are also there. They are a part of the book. And, if the book is divine and infallible revelation, then these are divine and infallible revelations of moral truth, because they are a part of the record. I need not enlarge upon this point, in order to enforce upon your thought and feeling the conviction that the Jews made progress just like all other people: only we find them here in their period of barbaric semi-development, and so we find barbaric morals, just as we find them in Asia, Africa, or in Europe, among our own brutalized and barbaric forefathers. There is the finger-marks of a natural growth in moral ideals, precepts, and principles all through the Old Testament, from the lowest beginning up to the sublime spiritual conceptions of the second Isaiah, as high and lofty a flight as the world contains.

2. Let us now come to the consideration of the second question. If there is any perfect morality anywhere in the Bible, we shall expect to find it in the New Testament. It is a very common opinion—the liberal orthodox are beginning to share it and stand by it—that, while the Old Testament contains much that is barbaric and outgrown, the New Testament, at any rate, is perfect. I think it is the opinion of large numbers, perhaps the majority, of liberals, even if they reject the dogmatic teachings of the New Testament, that the highest part of it is supreme, perfect, final, and cannot be outgrown. I think it is a very common feeling, on the part of liberal Christians generally, that Jesus was an absolutely sinless, perfect being, and that he gave a perfect system of ethics to the world. I shall not argue the question of his own character, as it is not a part of my theme. I will frankly express to you my opinion that I know no reason why I should suppose that Jesus of Nazareth was absolutely free from error and human frailty. I know no reason why I should suppose that he was perfect in every particular. Sublime, God-conscious, noble, sweet, pure, true,—yes ; yet I think there are evident traces in the New Testament of his sharing the limitations, the prejudices, the mistakes, and the common frailties of man.

But, say a great many, the Sermon on the Mount, at least, is faultless. I think it is a common opinion, among those of the liberal faith, that the Sermon on the Mount is a perfect standard of moral truth. They hold it up before the world, and demand the intellectual and moral homage of mankind for everything which it contains. But, as I study it, I cannot so regard it. The New Testament contains in essence, in germ, some of the highest and finest principles that the world has ever seen. If the saying of Jesus concerning loving God and man with all the heart could be



expanded and carried out practically, with all the light of the growing intelligence of the world ; if it could enter into all the details of human character,—it would make a perfect world ; but a system of ethics is not to be judged by some germ principle, but by the interpretation of that principle as it falls from the lips of the teacher himself.


Let us, then, test this Sermon on the Mount in two or three directions, by looking at some of the specific applications of ethical principles which fall from the lips of Jesus.

Before I pass to specify those parts, I wish to make one or two remarks concerning the attitude which the world holds toward this wondrous discourse. I do not believe there is a single orthodox person or church in the world, which even tries, strictly and literally, to obey the Sermon on the Mount. If any body of people, any city, any town, any tribe, any nation, should attempt to carry out these teachings literally, it would bring the world, as far as they were concerned, to a stand-still. In other words, many of those principles are simply impracticable. They never have been carried out and never can be in this kind of a world. Those who laud them the most never think of trying to obey them. Let us now specify a few particulars.

Jesus teaches us, as plain as language can express it, improvidence, lack of forethought, lack of careful provision for the future. Again, the doctrine of charity which is here inculcated has perhaps wrought more evil in the past history of the world than much of the hard-heartedness and cruelty of the rich. I am perfectly well aware that men attempt to reinterpret all these sayings and make them mean what they think they ought to mean ; but it seems to me that the true and just and common-sense canon of criticism would lead us to judge these sayings of Jesus in the light of the thought of his time, not in the light of the thought of ours.

So judging them, we are to take them literally. We are to take him as meaning what he says. He says, "Take no thought for the morrow." I know that they translate that, "Be not anxious about the morrow"; but, even if I grant so much, still the world could not get on by literally obeying it. The world *must* be anxious about the morrow. The world must take thought. The world must provide for the future. The very distinction between barbarism and civilization is that the barbarian obeys this principle, and the civilized man never did, does not, and never can. One of the highest marks of civilization is that men have planned, forecast, traced the present working causes to their possible consequences, and provided against the future. We cannot live in this world like lilies and birds, unless we are transformed into lilies and birds. We are men, factors in a complex civilization, and the principles which apply to these things do not apply to us.

Jesus teaches us that, if we trust in the Father, if we ask, we shall receive; that we are to care only for the kingdom of heaven; that we are to make no provision for the morrow. That is the simple, ingenuous teaching of Jesus. In his doctrine of giving, he says: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Lend, asking for nothing again, expecting nothing. That is, if anybody comes and asks you for anything, let him have it without any regard to ever receiving it again. That is the simple teaching; and we know that is most likely to have been the meaning of Jesus, because these ideas were all in the air at the time. The young man comes to him, and asks, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And his reply is, "Go, sell everything thou hast, and give to the poor." If a man should obey literally that direction to-day, he would be considered a public enemy. This doctrine of



charity, as far as carried out, has always tended to create permanent pauperism. If it were carried out in all its literalness, it would fill the world with irresponsible *lazzaroni*. It is sometimes said that these teachings were intended to be only local and temporary in their application. If so, it is at least a serious defect that a statement of that fact is not plainly made.

Take the next step, the teaching of Jesus concerning poverty and riches in general, which is very near akin to this. The doctrine of the New Testament all the way through is that riches are evil. "Blessed are the poor." "Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation." "Blessed are they that weep now, for they shall laugh." "Woe unto those that laugh, for they shall weep." Take the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It is ordinarily assumed that Lazarus was somehow a very virtuous man, and that Dives was a bad man. Jesus does not say one single word about Dives being a bad man. There is not a charge brought against him, except that he was rich. He does not say anything about Lazarus being a good man. There is no praise for him, except that he was poor. When they get into the next world, Dives is not told that he is to suffer in consequence of his having been a sinner; but Abraham says to him, "Remember, in your lifetime, you had your good things, and Lazarus evil things: now, he is comforted, and you are tormented." Not a word about good or bad. Dives is simply punished to make things even, and Lazarus rewarded to make things even. All the way through the New Testament, there is a very apparent antipathy to wealth; and the Catholic Church has rightly interpreted it, in making voluntary poverty one of the Christian virtues. Yet modern civilization has developed the fact, beyond possibility of question, that wealth, the accumulated resources

of the world, lies at the very base and is the prime and essential condition of all civilization. There is no possibility of man being civilized until there is a little saved beyond what is needed to eat up or wear out for the day. There is no chance for schools, for music, for art, for education, no chance for anything beyond taking care of man as an animal, until there is some wealth saved in the world. Lay not up for yourselves riches on earth, only care about riches in the next world, says the New Testament. I think it is a very good idea to look out for both ; but the world would come to a stand-still, and civilization would be undermined and a failure, if those precepts were literally carried out.

Let me turn to another ethical principle, touching marriage and divorce. I think it is generally taken for granted that the New Testament is impervious to criticism here, if nowhere else ; and yet it seems to me that this is far from true. Jesus' doctrine of divorce is one that no Protestant nation has ever dared to incorporate into law or carry out in practice. Yet they claim to be Christian in their methods of legislation.

Jesus says you shall put away your wife for one cause and one only ; but, mark you, he does not make any provision for the wife putting away her husband at all ! The New Testament doctrine of divorce is entirely one-sided. The wife is not permitted to put away her husband for any cause.


Another point. Not simply in the teaching of the Book of Revelation and of Paul, but in the teaching of Jesus himself, marriage does not occupy the highest social rank. It is a little under a cloud. There is something else that is better. Jesus himself says that, if a man is able to receive it, the celibate life is superior to the married one. Paul's direction about marriage is that it is better to marry than to do worse. In the Book of Revelation, the one hundred and

forty-four thousand peculiar saints set apart from all the rest, even in heaven, who have the highest seats and to whom special honor is given, are those who have lived perfectly virginal lives. The doctrine is that the celibate has superior sanctity. It puts us in the position of thinking that God has made us what we are, and then is ready to teach us that, if we go against the laws of the natures he has given us, and do something else, we shall gain his favor more certainly than as though we carried out the laws that he himself has made. The New Testament thus, it seems to me, contains the germs of all European monasticism and asceticism and justifies them, and therefore is no guide for the practical morality of the world to-day in these respects.

There is another point. Let us take the teaching of the New Testament concerning resistance to evil ; the doctrine concerning the citizen's relation to government. What is it? "Resist not evil." The Quaker is the only man that attempts to carry out the doctrine of the New Testament in this direction ; and, if all the world were Quakers, we might possibly get along with it, though I question whether, even then, it would not be a pretty tame, poor kind of a world. Through resistance to injury, resistance to tyrants, fighting for liberty, fighting for right, has the civilization of the world grown. Paul says : "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." "The powers that be are ordained of God." That is substantially the New Testament doctrine. The powers that be are manifestations of the will of God, and resistance to tyranny and injury of any kind is un-Christian. Yet look back down the pathway of the ages up which our ancestors have trod, leading to the grand ideas of freedom and civilization which we hold to-day. See the barons at Runnymede demanding from King John the concessions of the *Magna Charta*. The influence of the New

Testament would have been on the side of the weak-minded, vacillating, unscrupulous, tyrannous John. Come down to the period of the Commonwealth, and see Cromwell with his Roundheads fighting against King Charles. The old English Church was only logical when, after the death of the king and the restoration, at the end of Cromwell's rule, it inserted a special passage in the Book of Common Prayer in memory of the blessed saint and martyr King Charles. The Puritans, according to the New Testament ethics, were wrong in resisting the divine right and authority of the king. We were wrong at the time of the Revolution. The French were wrong when they threw off the mountainous tyranny of ages, and stood up at last free men. Do you know the world has come to the vantage-ground of civilization by not being literally obedient to the Sermon on the Mount? Men have reasoned, out of their own experience, laws of right and truth which have been spoken of God through the mouthpiece of the events of the time ; and these have superseded any teachings that preceded them.

I must touch one other point. The dominant teaching of the New Testament was other-worldly. It cast slight and contempt on this life, the flesh, and everything concerning it. Of course, then, there was no place in it for anything like that spirit of truth, that spirit of investigation into natural phenomena and forces, such as have come to grand embodiment in the modern science of the world. The teaching of the New Testament is that faith is one of the highest virtues. When Jesus reappeared to his disciples, Thomas did what any one would do to-day : he asked proof of a stupendous miracle. And — though Jesus forgives him, forgives him for a virtue — he is represented as saying to him, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Blessed are those who shut their eyes, and



accept that which is given them as truth. We want no such blessing in the modern world. The experience of the civilized world is crowning doubt among the virtues, placing it as high as faith. It is just as much a duty to doubt a thing that is not true or proved as to believe a thing that is proved. This spirit, then, of modern investigation, of demanding credentials of that which claims to be truth, of investigating nature, her laws and forces, recognizing the fact that it is by knowing what these are and getting into right relations with them that the noblest civilization of the world is built up,—this whole scale of virtues, so to speak, on which so large a part of the best things in the world depend, are not New Testament virtues at all. This is something that the modern world has developed since that day, something that could not have been known then because the world had not then attained its majority, and was not free to look over the universe for itself.

The New Testament, then, does not contain, it seems to me, a final, perfectly developed system of ethical teaching. I wish not to criticise it or to find fault with it. I have not a word of fault to find with it, judged by the standard of the age and time. Do not understand me as attempting to pick flaws in the character and teachings of Jesus. I only say that the first century is not the nineteenth; that God is alive, and has been alive for nineteen hundred years; and, if the world has made any progress, it is perfectly natural that we should be in advance of the people who lived nearly two thousand years ago. That is infidelity, that is lack of faith in God, that takes the ground that the world is not making any progress; that in two thousand years we have done nothing and come to nothing, but have been simply running around in a little circle, ending where we began. I believe in the theory of the divine Life and its relation to this

world that teaches us that God is perpetually before us as Leader; that the new experiences which he gives us in each generation of time give new conceptions of right and wrong, higher views of God and man and duty, something nobler and better than the world has ever seen until to-day.

Were it in the line of my theme, and had I time, I should love to dwell upon the other side, to point out what I regard as original, grand, and permanent in the ethics of Jesus. But I have had another object this morning,—that of testing the *perfection* of the New Testament teachings. And I ask that what I have said may be judged in the light of that purpose.

## The Present Use and Worth of the Bible.

---

NO ONE who is familiar with the results of modern criticism, scientific investigation, and historic research, can possibly hereafter hold the same theory concerning the Bible which has so long dominated the brain and the conscience of the world. The Bible has come down, in one sense, from that lofty pedestal of power and unique supremacy on which it has stood; and it must henceforth take its place, to be judged by the same rules of criticism, along with all the other sacred literatures of the world. That is not by any means saying that the other sacred literatures of the world are as good as the Bible. When I say that one of the California big trees is to be studied in precisely the same way as an ordinary pine-tree or wayside shrub, that it is just as natural as they, that it has developed according to precisely the same methods, and is to be studied after the same principles of botany and of vegetable growth, I do not say that the California tree is no higher, no grander, no more wondrous than the wayside shrub. The Bible takes its place alongside all the other literatures of the world; and it will demonstrate its fitness to stand above them, overlooking them, grander, higher than they, provided it is fitted to occupy this position. And this certainly is all that any believer in it can rationally desire. The Bible can no longer be regarded as an infallible inspiration concerning religious


truth. It can no longer be regarded as an ultimate standard of judgment concerning ethics. It is no longer scientific authority. It is no longer unimpeachable as an historic record of a people whose life it details through the course of so many changing centuries.

What then? Are we reduced to the alternative that has been so many times held up for us,—the whole Bible according to the old ideas of it, or nothing? Are we to worship the Bible, or else fling it to the rubbish-heap? Must we read it as infallible all the way through, from cover to cover, or else never read it at all? Is it treating it as God's word in every sentence, phrase, and letter, or else as no longer worth the attention of rational men? I am perfectly well aware, as are you, that this alternative is very commonly pointed out to us, and we are expected to choose the one or the other. For my part, I decline to be thrust through by either horn of such an unreasonable dilemma.

There are two main questions that I want to ask you to consider with me this morning. Has this change which has come over the position and estimate of the Bible been productive of loss or gain to the modern world? This is the first question. That is, are we richer or poorer than we were as the result of criticism concerning the Bible?

The next question is, Of what use and value is this Bible to the man who looks upon it simply as human literature, developed according to the laws of the other literatures of the world?

I. Take these two questions in their order. We are perpetually told that, if we give up the Bible,—and by giving up the Bible is meant giving up a particular theory about it and a particular use of it,—we have lost all hope, all ground-work for religion, all basis for ethics, all reason for belief and trust in God, all ground for hope in a future life. The



warning cry is constantly rung in our ears that it must be the old theory of the Bible in its entirety, or else blank religious and moral darkness, "without God and without hope in the world." So far from accepting this, I am one of those who believe that the modern conception of the Bible is a distinct and definite gain to the world ; and I propose to show you why I think so in two or three simple particulars.

In the first place, he who holds this modern conception of the book is relieved from the burden that the intellect and the conscience of the enlightened modern world is finding too heavy to bear. We are no longer under obligations to defend that which is intellectually indefensible. We are no longer under obligation to apologize for that which certainly needs apology, if the rational intellect of the world is to be trusted.

Let me point out just what I mean in one or two directions. He who holds to the infallibility of the Bible and holds his conception of religion in that kind of framework is perpetually challenged in this direction or that. If he goes to a man and says, "I want you to accept my religion, to become religious according to my ideas," the man to whom he speaks will be certain to say, if he be one who has doubted the infallibility of the Bible, "Must I believe the Biblical account of the creation of the world, which has been demonstrated to be false?" What answer can the old type of Bible apologist make to a challenge of this sort? No answer, except to say: "You must forego the use of your intellect ; you must give up the result of modern knowledge ; you must shut your eyes, and accept that which the best knowledge of the world declares to be untrue. You must do this, or you cannot be a lover and follower of God. You cannot be, in the highest and truest sense of the word, 'religious.'" In other words, the man occupying the old traditional stand-point must forego

intellect, knowledge, and brain ; distrust them ; leave them one side, wondering why God ever gave them to man. That is only one illustration.

Again, the doubter who would be religious, and who would also like to keep his brains, if he may, beginning with the first chapter of Genesis, will run all the way through, and will say: "What about the incredible story of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, intellectually incredible, morally indefensible? What about the conquest of Canaan; the shaking down of city walls at the sound of a ram's horn blown by the people; the staying of the sun in the heavens until the end of a battle can be reached? What about human sacrifice? What about the cruelty and immorality of a man like David, still said to be a man after God's own heart? What about the genealogies of the New Testament? What about its stupendous miracles that no one can explain? What about the prophecies of the immediate coming of the kingdom from the Master's own lips, and as yet unfulfilled?" I speak of these things to indicate the kind of intellectual and moral burden, the load, that rests upon a man who attaches his religion to the old conception of the Bible, who must defend all these things; for they cannot be defended in the court of reason. He must either do this, or he must forego the use of his intellect, shut his eyes, and accept whatever is given. He must torture and twist texts out of their natural meaning, until there is wrought into the very fibre of his intellectual and moral nature the warp and woof of uncertainty, of deception, of unreality, and he questions whether words in their connections anywhere mean really what they say, getting into a state of mind like that of the clergyman who said to me the other day, "If my people understood what I say as I understand it, they would not listen to me for a week." I think it is a grand gain to be

able to throw off this burden, which neither the past nor the present has been able to bear, and to accept that which is true because it is true, feeling under no obligation to shut one's eyes or to stop one's thinking.

Akin to this is another point, in some respects sufficiently important to make it worthy of separate mention. The world is set intellectually free by this modern conception of the Bible. He who holds the old ideas may claim to be intellectually free; but it is only the claim of a man who, shut within certain definite but very narrow limits, proclaims that he is perfectly free, because he does not choose to step outside of those limits. But, if the time ever comes when he wishes to step outside, then the bondage becomes irksome and unbearable. I remember my own experience, when I was studying theology in the seminary. I was told to study with perfect freedom, to make excursions through the universe wherever I would, through science, philosophy, criticism, history; but I knew all the while that there was a law, unuttered, which made it perfectly certain that if, after my excursions, I did not come back and settle down within these definite narrow limits, I was banned, excluded from the fellowship of those with whom I had been friends, whom I had learned to love, and who, as I believed, and as I was taught to believe, possessed the final and ultimate truth of God. I say it is a grand gain to set the human intellect free in this regard.

According to the old ideas, when Copernicus began to study the nature of this universe, he was trespassing on dangerous ground; for the minute that he found out that it did not accord with the Biblical story, that moment he was infidel and outcast. His system of demonstrated truth was opposed by all those who claimed officially to represent God on earth. When Magellan, starting on his voyage of dis-

covery around the world, declared that he believed the earth was round, because he noticed that its shadow cast on the face of the moon during an eclipse had a circular outline, he was taking his stand on the reality of the universe that God had made; but he was a rebel against God's church, God's book, God's infallible, revealed truth, according to all the standards of the time. He was not free, except by making himself outcast and infidel. And so, when Darwin, tracing through long years the problem as to the origin and nature of man, comes to the conclusion that the Eden story is not true, what must he do? He must either assert the liberty of thought, and dare to look God's universe in the face, and ask it questions, and listen to receive its answer, or he must shut his eyes to what he knew was the truth, and bend his intellectual hands and feet to the wearing of spiritual chains. There is no freedom, there can be no freedom, of intellect in the face of a system that claims to be absolutely infallible, unquestionably true.

It is, then, a grand gain to set the mind of the world free. For note you this: if the teaching of this claimed infallible system be true, then God's universe must be in accord with it; and ultimate search, deepest investigation, can only confirm it. Why, then, any need of the claimed infallibility? Here, then, is another distinct and definite and grand gain.

There is one more that I must mention, which is even more magnificent, if possible, than either of these, because it touches the heart, the life, the hope, of man.

Let us look for a moment at the outlook over this world, this changing scene of human history. One who occupies the old stand-point, what must he believe? He must believe that the silent God sat in the heavens uttering never a word or a warning for thousands of years; that at the last he selects one family, leaving all the rest of the world to wander



and perish. He selects one little family, and reveals to the founder of this family a hint of something to come in a far-off time. Then, ages go by. This little family grows ; but its light extends nowhere beyond its own limits. Age after age goes by, and the great outlying thousands and millions of the world are still perishing, and no word of warning is uttered, no hand reached out to lift them up or help. By and by there comes another who claims, or on whose behalf the claim is made, that he is the very God of the universe, himself come down to earth in the form of a man who lives and dies. His church is founded, and Christian history begins. Eighteen hundred years, and almost another century, have gone by, and not a third of the wide world yet has heard the message that God has spoken, or has felt the touch of his hand thrilling with love and help. On this theory, it seems to me that God's dealing with this world, if he was in earnest, and if he meant to save it, is the most stupendous failure that human history has to record. But, on this other theory, what ?

We are able to believe that this book is one among other books ; our religion one among other religions,—all of them equally natural, equally divine except in degree ; that, in every case, all these people were God's children, and that, in what little light they had, they were following after God, if haply they might find him ; that, with stammering lip or not fully uttered expression, they were giving vent to their thoughts, their hopes, their feelings, their fears, reaching out and up after the divine ; that God's light has flooded the earth from the beginning, shining into the brains and the hearts of men, just as fast and as far as those hearts and those brains were capable of receiving it ; that all men thus are God's children, and that all of them have been guided and led,—never for a moment forsaken, never for a


moment forgotten; each one in his own dialect uttering his hopes and aspirations, and reaching out and finding God. We are able to believe, on this theory, that Pope was right when he wrote his grand universal prayer:—

“Father of all! in every age,  
In every clime adored,  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord! . . .

“To Thee, whose temple is all space,  
Whose altar, earth, sea, skies,  
One chorus let all beings raise,  
All nature’s incense rise!”

We are able to believe, for the first time in human history, that, when we utter the words, “Our Father, who art in heaven,” they have a world-wide, universal, all-humanity-embracing meaning. They are a mockery on the other theory. For, if that be true, God has chosen, as his children, a few, no better than the rest, judged by human standards, and has left the others, like sheep without a shepherd, to wander in the wilderness and be devoured by wild beasts at their will. These seem to me some grand reasons why we may count the modern change of theory concerning the Bible a great gain instead of a loss.

II. But it is time for me to turn to my second question, and indicate to you three or four of the uses which the Bible may well have for us who have given up the old theories concerning it. In the first place, curiously enough, it seems to be imagined by those who have held to the old ideas that a religious truth ceases to be truth at all, unless it is backed up by an infallible inspiration. How do we find out what is truth? We find it out by experience, do we not? If it were infallibly revealed to men that corn is wholesome to




eat, would it add anything to the fact discovered by human experience? Suppose it were recorded in a claimed infallible inspiration that corn was poison, experience would demonstrate that it was not. In either case, the revelation would be worth nothing concerning such a thing. Any revelation concerning the practical welfare of men would mean nothing to us, until we had lived it out by practical experience. We find out what is wholesome by testing it: we find out poison by testing that. We find out all the facts of human life in the same way. The methods by which conduct ought to be ordered in the relations of man with man,—social, political, commercial truths,—these are discovered by experience. Those who reject these truths ultimately go to the wall, crushed by them, because they are a part of the eternal ongoing of the resistless universe that has God's omnipotence at its heart. The truth, then, that the Bible contains remains true on any theory, and it will always be valuable as a part of the food and as part of the mental and moral stimulus and inspiration of man. For

“Not all the critics can crush with their ban  
One word that is true to the nature of man.”

In the next place, for many centuries yet, I know not how long, the Bible is going to have a grand advantage over all the other books of the world by reason of the sacred memories, the splendid associations that have clustered about it in the past, and will cluster about it for ages yet to come. What do I mean by this? Do you not know, as you look over the past of your own lives, that many and many a time a truth has been uttered in your ears that on some other occasion, in the midst of other circumstances, would seem to you commonplace enough, a simple truth, abstract as a statement of a principle in algebra, perhaps, so far as it is

concerned, one that you may have heard before and may have heard many times since ; and yet, in your experience, it is set quite apart, surrounded by a halo of sacred light, having a meaning that it could not have had but for the fact that it is linked in your memory with some of the sacred associations of the past, with some epoch hour of your life? It was the word, perhaps, that mother spoke to you when you were a little boy at her knee ; the word that father uttered when you left home for the last time ; the word that some brother or sister may have spoken on their sick-bed, just before they faded away into the silence,—some word that comes to you with a power beyond itself, linked with memory, with experience, and that has for you all the added weight of this sacred association. Now, the Bible, as no other book, has this hold in our sympathies and on our hearts. The Bible to most of us, whatever our creed may be, is bound up with the memories of childhood and mother and home. Some words from the Bible are connected with them, or with that hour which we do not remember, but of which we have been told, when we were consecrated by the noble and well-intended aspirations of our parents. Some words from the Bible are linked with the marriage service, that has changed for better or worse the whole after years of our life. Some words from the Bible are linked with those last sad funeral hours in which we have laid away those that we learned for so many years to love. The Bible is bound up as is no other book with the sacred and tender associations of our past.

Then, again, on a larger than a merely personal scale, what other book is there that is so woven into that province of the world's civilization to which we belong? We cannot read of any of the great epochs of English achievement, of American advancement, without seeing that some words from the



Bible played their part in the victory or the defeat. No one can read of Cromwell, of the Puritans, of the development of liberty in England, without seeing that the Bible was there, some of its grand words being the mainspring and inspiration of some of the noblest of all those movements.

Then, the Bible is associated with much of the grandest art of the world, with its music, with all that is noblest and finest in our civilization. Whatever theory we hold of it, that makes no difference. These are the facts. It is possible, in a sense in which it is true and can be true of no other book, that this is the book of Christendom; and it will always occupy a unique position and have a unique and grand influence,—all the grander influence because we will be able to sift out the gold, weaving it into beautiful ornaments and implements of noble use, leaving the débris and the worthless material to find its own place.

There is another point that seems to me of a good deal of importance. You will notice, as I conduct these services from Sunday to Sunday, that there are large parts of the Bible that I do not read. I select chapters or parts of chapters from both the Old Testament and the New, but I cannot read it indiscriminately. Large parts of it I pass by. For what reason? Simply because I wish to be perfectly frank and open as to what I believe, and because I do not choose to spend half my morning, after I have read a passage, in telling you that I do not believe it literally, and in explaining to you in what sense I do take it. The time will come, when we have passed through this transition hour, when the results of the criticism of the Bible have been settled, when the thoughts of men have found their place,—the time will come, I say, when I shall be able to read any part of this Bible from the pulpit, and not be misunderstood. I shall not be understood to believe a miracle, because I read

the account of it. I shall not be understood to accept as history an Old Testament legend, because I read it as a lesson. I can read from any other part of the literature of the world, and people understand me. I can draw out the lessons, beautiful and rich with human associations, from any legendary lore of the world, outside of the Bible, and never be misunderstood. The time will come when I can use the Bible in the same way ; and, when I can, I shall find, and you will find, that there is no book in the world so rich in human instruction as is this book. Legend, allegory, miracle, parable,—all wrought and woven through and through with the texture and color of human experience,—I shall be able to use them with a force that pertains to no abstract truth. It requires a high order of intellect to deal with abstract truth, pure and colorless. To illustrate in a concrete way what I mean : I remember that Mr. Collyer was one day telling me that he repeated a certain sermon to his people ; and, as he was coming out, one of them said, “I remember perfectly well that you have preached that sermon before.” Mr. Collyer replied, “I have no doubt of it ; but, if I had only happened to think to leave out the story of the little dog, you never would have remembered it in the world.” This carries the principle that illustration or a story, something concrete, something that touches human life, something that has the flavor of human experience about it, fixes itself in the memory. It is carried where abstract truth is lost and forgotten.

By and by, the time will come when I shall be able to read you the story of the cruse of oil that was an inexhaustible fountain from which the widow could pour and pour without refilling it, and I shall be able out of that to deduce grand lessons that are ideally true, whatever may be said concerning the outer shell that encloses them. The miracle of turn-

ing the water into wine at Cana of Galilee,—do you not see how at the heart of it there is a great universal human truth? Are there not experiences in the lives of us all, when the presence of some superior man or woman, the word of some superior wisdom, touches the commonplace of our lives, and transmutes them into gold? The story of the transfiguration,—do we not all climb up on heights of mountain outlook where our faces are transfigured, where they shine with a light they never knew before, and where we enter into communion, as did the disciples with Moses and Elias, with the great, the heroic of all the past, and where we enter into a new range of experience, something higher than we should be able to maintain as the ordinary level of life? These just as hints of what a storehouse of wealth for human lessons this old Bible will be, when we are able to read it with untrammelled intellect, and without stopping to think of critical questions of truth and untruth.

One thing more. The Bible must forever have one use and meaning that is true concerning it in a sense that is true of no other book. As far as my acquaintance with sacred literature extends, the Bible contains the most complete and finished religious biography in the world. That is, it traces, from the very earliest forms of the religious life, the origin, the birth, the growth, the development, the mistakes, the faults, the failures, the decline and fall of a great race religion. What is the use of that?

Let me illustrate a moment, to make it clear to you. A physician, if he wishes to know how to treat a well man to keep him well, or a sick man in order to cure his disease, must know, as far as possible, all that pertains to the birth, the growth, the disease, the health, the decay, and the death of a man; and so he starts with the little primal germ, and traces the physical life of man all the way through, and

this becomes to him a perpetual lesson, a storehouse of knowledge, a guide in the practical experience of his everyday life. We read the biography of a man; and, if we are wise, we extract from it lessons as to how to live. If the man has been faulty, if he has made mistakes, if he has wandered this way or that, all the better for us, as far as the instructiveness of that biography is concerned. If we are dealing with a chart that shows us the navigation of a dangerous coast, we do not want simply to know that here is an open channel: we want signals to indicate the places where wrecks have gone down. And so again, in regard to the religious books and biographies of the world, we need to know the mistakes, the faults, the wanderings, all that pertains to the religious experience of the race. We want to know it as a part of our text-book. As one more illustration, more commensurate with the theme, let me ask, What is the use to-day of reading Gibbon, the decline and fall of a great empire? Of supplementing that with all that can be known of the early times of Rome, of the time when it was a dominant force on the earth? Why, the history of that race is a perpetual storehouse of instruction for statesmen, for politicians, for all those who are interested for the social and political welfare of man. So, if you can give us a complete text-book that shall teach us concerning the origin of a great scheme of religious thought concerning God and man, you have given us a book that at all times shall act as warning, as instruction, as inspiration, as light, as guidance. And so the Bible, being the completest biography of the religious life of a race, must always, in the thought of any intelligent and serious man, occupy a unique and wonderful position, and maintain its influence as light and guidance for centuries.

Is there to be a loss of reverence and real religiousness in

the world springing out of and flowing from this change? I cannot believe it. It used to be supposed, and it was taught for ages, that it was impossible to train and maintain a spirit of loyalty on the part of a people, unless there was a visible symbol of that loyalty in king and sceptre and throne. And thousands of well-meaning men have fought for monarchy, because they believed that these outward and visible symbols were necessary to keep alive the spirit of loyalty and devotion. But have we not proved that that fear was vain? Has there ever been in the history of the world a grander development of loyalty, a more wide-spread devotion to it, a more unselfish outpouring of life than we have shown without either sceptre or throne or king? Have we not learned, as the result of human experience, that all the happiness of man, his welfare, his prosperity, are bound up with law-keeping and with order? We recognize all the great principles that underlie these things. And, though it be only an ideal, having no outward embodiment unless it be in a flag, still we are ready to pay to it our utmost devotion of heart and life. And so I believe concerning this Bible. Whatever theory goes up or down, taken as a fact, religion is a part of the experience of the world, it is the tidal wave which lifts the aspiring heart of man toward the stars.


It is the result of human experience. And this demonstrates its utility, its power, its grasp on the heart and the brain of the world; and, on the basis of this, we may expect it will forever abide.

The Bible, then, may be left to hold its own place. The religiousness, the reverence, the loyalty, the love, the aspiration of man will not only remain, but will go on, and grow and broaden till they become not only parts, but the very heart and soul, of all that is noble in human civilization.

## THE ETERNAL BIBLE.

---

WHATEVER theory we may hold concerning the universe of which we are a part and in which we live, it is still true that, when we analyze the word to learn its most abstract and general definition, we find that human life consists of a series of actions and reactions between the individual and his environment. You will find, if you will take the trouble to think it out more particularly than I have time to illustrate it this morning, that, in whatever direction you start, whether you deal with man in his social relations, as a business man, as an artist, or what not, that this abstract statement which I have made covers the entire truth. Life consists in a series of actions and reactions between man and the universe. And a successful life, as distinguished from any other kind, depends entirely upon the question whether man perceives the right relations in which he ought to stand to these forces and powers all around him and with which he deals. The commercial man, for example, if he rightly apprehends the problem given him to solve, and is capable of dealing with it, will be a successful merchant. The lawyer, if he rightly apprehends the points of the case given him to manage, and has intelligence and force to mould and shape his case in accordance with what he perceives, will succeed. And so in any other department of human life. And this right relation, or the perception of this right relation, in which man stands, or ought to stand, to the forms



and forces of the universe about him, is what we mean by the word "truth." If you will analyze it carefully, you will find that truth has just this meaning and no other. A truth of thought is simply my way of stating the fact that the external reality with which I am dealing corresponds to the thought that I have already in my brain. If, for example, I take a flower in my hand, it impresses me as possessing a certain shape, a certain color, a certain fragrance. If my perception is correct,—that is, if I see the real relation between that flower and my brain,—I see the truth concerning it. The truth, then, in any direction, so far as man's thought is concerned, is only the establishment of perfect correspondence between the thought and the thing. A practical truth, as apart from this abstract truth, is simply a perception and establishment of right relations between man's active faculties and the external world with which he deals.

Now, how does man discover this truth? Is there more than one way? I believe that truth always, everywhere, in all cases, has been discovered, is being discovered to-day, and must be discovered forever, through the process of human experience; for truth pertains to the nature of things. It is a part of our life, of the relationship in which we stand to the forms and forces of the universe about us. To talk of truth away off somewhere in the depths of the universe, that does not touch us, that does not come into relation with us in any way, that has nothing to do practically with our life or thinking, is to talk of nothing. There is no truth for man apart from this truth of perception and practical relationship in which he stands to the life of things around him. Men talk of truth as if it were a sort of entity stored up somewhere outside of the world, that could be injected into it from without, as if it were something outside of the nature of things that could be given to men, as

though it were a commodity placed in their hands, as though it were a light that could be shed abroad over the earth from outside, as though it were a series of propositions that could be put into men's brains and hearts from some external source.

If I have made you apprehend clearly the very abstract thought with which I began, that truth is simply a part of the nature of things, that it consists essentially in the relation in which we stand to the forms and forces that are around us, you will see the absurdity of supposing that either God or man could bring truth from the outside, and put it into the universe or into human life. The only way by which men ever did apprehend or ever can apprehend truth is as the result of their own experience in dealing with these forms and forces with which we come into relation day by day, year after year, and age after age.

Truth, then, always and everywhere, is the result of human experience. There is no other method by which we can possibly come into possession of it. The amount of truth which any race, any people, will possess at any given stage of their experience or progress, will depend, of course, upon the character of that people, upon their intelligence, and upon the range of their experience. It is also true, in every race and in every period of the world's history, that there is some one man or a group of men or a few men scattered here and there, who possess a clearer insight, a keener perception, a broader power of generalization, than is possessed by the common mass of busy people engaged in the practical concerns of life. And these keener, more thoughtful men, those that have the clearer insight, what will they do? They will not be able to discover or formulate any truth that has not been experienced by the race to which they belong, but they will be able to see more clearly

that which others dimly feel. They will be able to interpret in language that which the mass of the people have partially apprehended, but to which they have never been able to give expression. Just as you say, when you are listening to a man, "He is giving expression to what I have been feeling after, and half-perceived, for years, but have never been able to put into words"; so precisely these seers, these prophets, these leading men of the world, are able to condense, to crystallize, so to speak, to give outline and form and expression to that which the mass of their fellow-men have experienced and dimly felt. And because this truth that the seers of the world have perceived and expressed seems to the mass of the people so wonderful, so much above what they themselves feel capable of saying or clearly apprehending or expressing, we find—and this is true all over the world, in every clime, among every people—that, when these truths of human experience have thus been formulated and expressed, the mass of the people have looked upon them with so much wonder and reverence that they have come to believe that they are a divine revelation, something let down from above, something coming out of the sky. They have not been able to understand that such marvellous truths concerning the universe and human life, such wonderful speculations concerning God and the future, could possibly have sprung out of the common experience of common men. So they have told themselves stories and invented fairy tales of how these seers and prophets have had special ways of access to and intercourse with teachers higher than human. In this way have grown up stories of divine and supernatural revelations of systems of truth. In each case, this supposed divine and supernatural system has only been the fragment of truth which this particular people, up to this particular point in the line of its develop-

ment, has experienced or been able to put into formal expression.

Two or three results which have been repeated over and over again in the history of the world now come into view. When any particular people has made up its mind that it has received from the gods, or their god, a special, supernatural revelation of truth, then what? Two results in almost every case have followed,—results perfectly natural and springing out of the circumstances in which they found themselves placed. They have received, they think, a divine, supernatural revelation of truth. The next step is that they persuade themselves that they have all the truth there is,—all the truth, at any rate, that men need or ever will need; and so they close their book, their Bible, or revelation, and say, Here, we have a sure and complete compendium of divine truth concerning the origin of this universe, of nature, of God, his purposes toward man, and all that pertains to the future of human destiny. The Mohammedan caliph is reported to have said concerning the Alexandrian Library: "If these books agree with the Koran, we do not need them; if not, they are false. So, in any case, let them be destroyed."

Along with this there always comes a certain spiritual pride, a certain religious self-conceit; and the people fancy that they must be special favorites of heaven,—and why not? If God has singled me out from all the thousands and millions of the world, if he has come in person to me, or sent a special messenger to me to tell me his secret, why should I not feel lifted up above the level of the ordinary run of my fellow-men? If, instead of its being one person, it is a race, precisely the same effect will follow; and so we do find, as a matter of history, that one race after another, in the past, has fancied that it has received this divine revelation, that it possesses a complete system of eternal truth;

and, as the next step, it fancies that it is the favorite of God, a chosen people, set apart, selected out of all the nations, and made the depositary of the divine truth.

And then what? Another natural step follows upon the heels of this. One of two things this people will do in such circumstances. They will either build a Chinese wall of exclusiveness around themselves, and look over the rest of the world and down upon it with scorn and contempt, neglect it, fold their arms in a sort of conceited content, and leave it to go its own way to destruction, regarding everybody but their own people as outside barbarians, while they live in the centre of the world and under the very dome of heaven; or else they will regard themselves as a missionary people, to whom this truth has been committed and upon whom has been imposed the duty of bringing all the rest of the world, either by persuasion or force, into subjugation to their ideas. We find that different religions have illustrated both types. Take the Chinese, for example. They occupy the Central Flowery Kingdom, and all the rest of the world are outside barbarians. They never think of sending out missionaries. It seems to them a matter of slight importance whether the rest possess the truth or not, or what their destiny in the future may be.

On the other hand, take the Buddhists, the Christians, the Mohammedans. They have considered themselves as divinely commissioned to proselyte all the rest of the world. They have sent out missionaries to compel them to come in. If they would not come in as the result of persuasion, they felt they must force them; as the Mohammedans wrote their short creed — Allah is Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet — on the point of the sword; thus, if in no other way, thrusting it down the throat or into the hearts of their enemies.

Thus, each people has taken its fragment of truth, and

supposed it to be the divine and complete system of religion. It has written its Bible, and supposed that here was the closed canon of the revelation of God, that they and they alone were the depositaries of eternal truth. This belief could very easily be held by any nation, as long as it was isolated, as long as the nations knew very little of each other, as long as there was no possibility of frequent communication all over the world. It is only within fifty years, perhaps, that some of these great systems of religion have been opened up to the thought and life of the modern world. As long as each people stayed at home and knew very little about its neighbors, it could very comfortably maintain its self-conceit, and suppose that it was the only civilized people, the only one that had any respectable religious ideas, the only one that had any noble principles of ethics, the only one that had ever received any light from heaven or understood the mysteries of God. But a change must come to any state like this. How does it come? As I have indicated. The one source of truth is experience, and the new movement comes as the result of deepened, broadened, enlarged human experience. These nations living quietly by themselves, so exclusive in their selfish content, have been compelled to become acquainted with each other.

War has done something toward this larger civilization. For, when nations fight with each other and come into the rough shock of conflict, they learn the stuff of which this other people is made; and there comes to them a larger sympathy of humanity, a larger feeling of the common elements of greatness, a larger appreciation of the fact that they are not the only people in the world, but that there are others, wise and mighty and strong as they.

Commerce has done more even than war; for it has covered all the seas with ships, and men have gone to and fro,

discovering the common brotherhood of humanity, finding similar religious and intellectual ideas, similar ethical principles. They have brought home the story; and so these ideas have been scattered from one nation to another, thus becoming the common property of civilization.

Discovery and scientific investigation have done something. for they have sent their explorers all over the world to study the history of these alien civilizations, their literature, their religious and moral ideas; and, thus, they have given us a grander and broader conception of men, nature, and life. So these various influences have been at work, and men have taken a higher position as the result of the growing experience of the world and of human life; and this growing experience has written a new chapter in the perception of truth, that the wise and thoughtful of all the world may read.

What has been the result? This old belief, on the part of these separated nationalities and religions, that they had all the truth, and that they were the only ones that had, is passing away. It has become impossible for an intelligent man any longer to believe it. Two grand objections face us, — and either one of them is strong enough to overthrow completely this theory,—an intellectual objection and a moral objection.

The intellectual objection I have already hinted and partly outlined. What have men learned, what have we Christians learned concerning some of the other religions of the world? We have learned that our experience has not been unique, but that it has been the universal experience of the world. We have learned also that our system of truth is only a fragment of the universal truth. We have learned that other people, other nations, have passed through similar experiences, and consequently have arrived at similar conclusions; that they have discovered similar truths, similar

ideas concerning the universe, God, and man, similar principles of morals, or ideas of right and wrong. We have learned that they have Bibles of their own, and that they think they came by divine revelation, as we have thought ours did; that they have set themselves up as the exclusive possessors of divine truth, just as we have; that they have had the same kind of conceit that we have had; that they have supposed they were favorites of God, as we have supposed we were; and that they have started out to convert the world, just as we have, and for precisely the same reasons. Furthermore, we have found that they have just as much reason for holding these opinions as we have had, no more and no less.

What is the next step? We are forced to the conclusion that one of two things is true. Either there were half a dozen divine revelations and half a dozen infallible Bibles,—in which case, we wonder why it would not have been just as well to give one universal, complete one in the first place; or to the conviction that there is not any universal religion in existence or any universal and infallible truth or any infallible Bible, but that we all have passed through similar stages, and by similar steps of human experience have arrived at similar conclusions. The result is irresistible that the truth we have reached has come to us—no less from God than on the other theory—through the process and by the method of our human experience in living out our life and dealing with these great principles and forces of the universe that touch us on every hand.

The moral objection is quite as strong as the intellectual one. As men grow wiser, as they grow better, as they have a larger conception of human brotherhood, broader ideas of justice, a deeper thought of truth, a wider sympathy and more care for human welfare, it ceases to be possible for

them to believe that the infinite God of this universe cares any more about one part of his children than he does about the rest. It ceases to be possible for man with a grandly developed and sympathetic moral nature to feel that the God of the whole earth is capable of being partial, of having his pets, of selecting either individuals or nations and giving them his special care, and leaving all the rest to wander in darkness, or fall into pits of destruction. The highest and noblest moral natures of the world would find it impossible to worship, or even to respect, a God who was capable of a partiality like that. It ceases then to be morally possible for men to hold this old exclusive, partial, selfish conception of God, of religion, of the Bible, of divine and infallible truth.

What then? What is the next step to which we are forced? This, plain and inevitable: a recognition of the fact that these separate and distinct religions are only parts of the universal religion yet to come; that these separate and closed Biblical canons are only chapters in the universal and eternal Bible, as yet only partially written.

I want now to note two main characteristics of this eternal Bible.

In the first place, it must cover and include all truth that touches the concerns of life and the welfare of man. In the second place, it must be forever being written and never done. These are the two tests by which you may judge the universal and eternal Bible of God.

Religion in its conception as it has hitherto prevailed in the world has been narrow. It has concerned itself only with a little fragment of human life. We talk about religion and business, religion and politics, religion and science, religion and art, religion and morality. The coming grander and truer conception of religion will, of necessity, sweep all

these particulars under its one grand generalization. A man must be religious in business, religious in politics, religious in science, religious in art, religious in everything. It must be the quality that permeates all life, the atmosphere that men breathe everywhere. Religion is the secret of the highest, truest life of man. Religion is the expression we give to the relation in which we stand to the universe,—that is, to God. It is our dealing with him. It is our dealing with the totality of life. No man can be in the broadest and truest and deepest sense of the word religious, except as he is a complete man, in right relations to all the forms and forces of the universe about him. And, if he is a complete and true man, he gives utterance to the truest and deepest conception of the religious life; for that is what religion means.

Religion, then, must deal with the physical nature of man. And here is one particular in which the Old Testament is far ahead of the New. Moses places sanitary laws side by side with the command to worship one God and no more, making one of equal importance with the other. The New Testament throws contempt upon this world, and speaks slightly of the body, "this vile body," "Bodily exercise profiteth little," etc. It is sprinkled all over with passages expressing contempt for this world, the material side of things; and yet there never was a sane or true religion except as it based itself on a sound and healthy physical life. We must begin with our religion right here. Cleanliness is not next to godliness merely. It is a part of godliness; and so is every other sanitary regulation that touches the welfare and health of the physical man.

This eternal Bible must go over the whole realm of truth. It must include all man's social relations, all political relations, all international relations, all science, all art. It

**must include everything that touches the life and happiness of man. The eternal Bible, then, will cover and include all truth, so far as it is developed and wrought out as the result of the experience of the world.**

I said that its second characteristic was that it was always being written and never finished. This, you will see, springs naturally out of the principles thus far developed. Truth, as far as it appertains to the welfare of man, being the result of human experience, developed by it, presented as the result of it, must of course keep step with human experience, and can never transcend it, so that humanity writes a new sentence in its Bible with every new step of human experience, with every new and larger contact with the universe in which it lives. The boy has the truth which pertains to the boyish nature; but, as he grows up and becomes a young man, he comes into new experiences, which enlarge and broaden his ideas. He has new and wider conceptions of life, that enable him to live the true life of a young man. The middle-aged man and the old man come into new experiences as they advance; and, thus, truth keeps step with human life.

This Bible, then, is not done. It never will be done, until the last thinking being is weary of thought, and fallen asleep.

There is one other phase of my subject, carrying it on and rounding it out, that I wish to bring to your thought, and which may seem somewhat new to you, put in just the way in which I propose to state it. Is there any reason in the nature of things why we should forever look at God, the universe, the great truths of religion, through Hebrew eyes and none other? Let us be glad and thankful for all the Hebrews saw. Let us rejoice for the depth and breadth of their religious experience, and take it as our light and guidance, as far as it extends; but is there any reason why

Americans should not come into contact, first hand, with the divine, as well as Hebrews, Egyptians, Buddhists, and Mohammedans? Is it not the same God above us? Are not the same heavens over us as bright with stars as were those that shone over the Judean hills? Are there not now as fair flowers, as fresh grasses, as those from which Jesus drew his lessons of religion and life? Are not as noble hearts, as unselfish devotion manifested to-day, as high qualities of manhood and womanhood in society as in olden times? Reversing and changing the purpose of those questions of Shylock, may we not say instead: Hath not an American eyes? Hath not an American a heart, brain, soul, religious faculties, moral perceptions, as well as a Jew or a Buddhist or a Mohammedan? Do we not stand in as intimate and close relations with the father-heart of God in the nineteenth century as men stood five hundred, a thousand, two, three thousand years ago? Has God moved farther off? Are the heavens more distant? Are we less wise, less capable of thinking, less capable of feeling than they were in the olden time?

I appeal to your consciousness, to your clearer thought, as to what are the ideals, the forces, and the methods that govern your own life to-day? Are you not guided by the Bible of the ages instead of the Bible of the Hebrews and the Christians? What are the doctrines, the ideas, the beliefs that are moulding and shaping your life to-day? They are a part of the life of to-day and not those of two thousand or five thousand years ago.

Where is our book of Genesis? It is not in the Bible. The book of Genesis that we believe in and that we are guided by was written by Copernicus, by Galileo, by Newton, by Laplace, by Lyell, by Spencer, by Darwin. And, if we profess to believe in the old Genesis, we are perpetually re-

interpreting and retranslating its ideas, so that they shall echo Copernicus and these other men. Where is our book of the Law? Do we really go to the Pentateuch to find out the principles by which we shall guide and govern our daily lives? No. We go to those men and to a hundred others who have studied for us and laid down the laws of this actual universe of which we are a part. We go to men like Dr. Carpenter, of London, to find out how this marvellous body of ours is made. Servetus and Harvey wrote some sentences in this wondrous book of the Law. Ferrier in his studies of the brain, Bain and his co-workers and compeers in outlining the marvellous nature and functions of our nervous system,—these men who have studied the real laws of the universe and human life, and have written them for us, they, not the Pentateuch, are the real book of the Law by which the modern world is being guided, whatever men may say or profess about it. Where are our divine histories, those that really move and control the world? They are not the Kings, Samuel, Judges, and the Chronicles of the Old Testament. They are the histories of Greece, of Rome, of the Middle Ages, of Germany, of the rise and progress of modern civilization, Green's history of the English people, Bancroft's history of America, all those that have given us the sources of that stream of national life of which we are a part. These are the histories that are moving the modern world.

Who are our heroes? Are they any longer Samuel, Jephthah, Gideon, and David, and the grand names of the old book that are a part of our childhood thought? No: they are the men that have fought for truth and for freedom and for human advancement. Our heroes are Winkelried, the barons that met King John at Runnymede, Cromwell of the Commonwealth, that grand group allied to Washington that figured in our Revolution, other men like Lincoln and Gar-

ri-son, men that have stood for truth and human right. These are the heroes that shine like stars in our moral and intellectual firmament, that give us the light by which we are guided and the inspiration for our every-day life.

Where are our ideal women? Are they Miriam and Deborah and Ruth and Esther and Mary and Dorcas, those that are simply names to us in the olden book? Are they not rather Mary Carpenter and Florence Nightingale and Frances Power Cobbe and Marian Evans of England, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Thompson, Mary A. Livermore, and a hundred others I might name, that are making and shaping the life of these modern times? If women like these had lived in the ancient days, they would have towered so much above the noblest of them all that either they would have been persecuted and put to death as ahead of their time, or idealized and worshipped as divine.

Who are the prophets and seers that lead and inspire us now? They will still continue to be in part those who have written the noble, burning words that have led on the world for so many centuries; but added to these are all the great religious leaders,—Zoroaster, Gautama, Confucius, Socrates,—the great men of more recent times,—Savonarola, Wickliff, Luther, Wesley, Swedenborg, Channing, Theodore Parker, these great seers, utterers of divine truth, those that have lifted up and led on the life of the world.

And what are really the Gospels that fire us, that come to us whispering their good news? They are in part those that have been written in the days of old. They include the Gospels of our New Testament, the light and life that came through Jesus of Nazareth; but they include also those other flashes of light that have come out of the inner heavens of human thought and life, and are streaming out of

them still. They are to be found very largely in the ranks of those men that have been thought to be opposed to gospel and to God, in the ranks of men doing the work of science. These are bringing to us the good news that man is mighty, that there are secret forces and powers in this universe that man can discover, that he can harness as his servants and compel to do his work. They are discovering that man may control and mould all the forces of the universe around him, and lift himself up from drudgery and slavery to that nature that has dominated him so long.

Where are the apocalypses, those that unfold the future and teach us what it is that is coming? They are not like that wonderful phantasmagorical dream of John that closes the New Testament. They are again these same men of science; for, as Patrick Henry said, there is no way of foretelling the future except by the past. And it is the study of this past, the study of the principles that underlie and control the development of civilization up to this hour, that are indicating the possibilities of future growth and progress. And, looking along the line of these up the ages, by a faith that is not credulity, a faith forever springing out of human experience, a faith based in the nature of things, we see man sceptred and crowned controlling the world, with its forces at his feet, its mightiest powers his ministers, himself master henceforth of the world and of his destiny.

These, then, I say, are the real chapters of the eternal Bible that are being written age after age as the result of human discovery and experience,—a Bible not yet complete, a Bible in which each new truth is a sentence, and each new grand discovery a chapter or a book, and that shall go on being written by the finger of God in human life forever. And, as it progresses, it shall cease to be a book whose every page is blood-spattered, as were the Old Testament books of

the past. No longer shall its pages be defaced with so copious a rain of human tears. It shall not be so largely made up of groans at the world's injustice or with human cries for help. For the time shall come, it is coming progressively, when this truth of God shall be more and more written in the hearts and lives of men, and when it shall be no longer necessary to say to one another, know thou the Lord, know thou the truth, know thou the perfect religious life ; for all shall know and live in the harmony of this truth and life the wide world over forevermore.







BS511.S28 1897  
Beliefs about the Bible /  
Andover-Harvard



3 2044 077 986

